

"In the latter days, the sun shall rise from the west" • Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him)



I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America, and
to the Republic for which it stands: one Nation under God,
indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

Change: The Muslim Perspective

15 Religion and
Politics: A delicate
balance

18 Health Care
in Islam:
Responsibilities of
the State

20 Islamic
Principles of
Economic Stability

34 Muslims
Living under a
non-Muslim
Government

The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community

The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community is a religious organization, international in its scope, with branches in more than 189 countries in Africa, North America, South America, Asia, Australasia, and Europe. The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community was established in 1889 by Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^{as} (1835-1908) in Qadian, a small and remote village in the Punjabi province of India. He claimed to be the expected reformer of the latter days, the Awaited One of the world community of religions (The Mahdi and Messiah). The Movement he started is an embodiment of the benevolent message of Islam – peace, universal brotherhood, and submission to the Will of God – in its pristine purity. Hadhrat Ahmad^{as} proclaimed Islam as the religion of man: “The religion of the people of the right path” (98:6). The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community was created under divine guidance with the objective to rejuvenate Islamic moral and spiritual values. It encourages interfaith dialogue, diligently defends Islam and tries to correct misunderstandings about Islam in the West. It advocates peace, tolerance, love and understanding among followers of different faiths. It firmly believes in and acts upon the Qur’anic teaching: “There is no compulsion in religion” (2:257). It strongly rejects violence and terrorism in any form and for any reason.

After the passing of its founder, the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community has been headed by his elected successors. The present Head of the Community, Hadhrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad, was elected in 2003. His official title is Khalifatul Masih V or Fifth Successor of the Promised Messiah..



Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (1835-1908)

Editor

Falahud Din Shams

Editorial Board

Imam Mubasher Ahmad

Dr. Shanaz Butt

Hasan Hakeem

Amjad Mahmood Khan, Esq.

Naveed Malik

Staff Editors

Maham Khan

Naser Shams

Staff Writers

Saad Ahmad

Arif Humayun

Dr. Zia H. Shah

Shazia Sohail

Hasan Hakeem, Design/Layout

Shuaib Shams, Circulation

Editor's Notes:

The *Muslim Sunrise* is published by the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, USA, 15000 Good Hope Road, Silver Spring, MD 20905, Phone 301.879.0110, Fax 301.879.0115, under the auspices of Dr. Ahsanullah Zafar, Ameer and National President. The views and opinions expressed by individual contributors in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, USA.

The *Muslim Sunrise* welcomes letters to the editor, questions and submissions. Email us at MuslimSunrise@Ahmadiyya.us or go online to www.MuslimSunrise.com.

Library of Congress Call Number BP195.A5 M8

Mailing Address: The Muslim Sunrise, 2 S 510 Route 53, Glen Ellyn, IL 60137, Phone: (630) 790-4100, ext. 206, Fax: (630) 793-4100.

Muslims follow the name of God's prophets with the prayer *alaehis salaam* or 'may peace be upon him,' and for the Holy Prophet Muhammad, *sallallahu alaehi wasallam* or 'may peace and blessings of God be upon him.' Companions of prophets and righteous personalities who have passed away are saluted by *radhi-Allaho anhu/a* or 'may Allah be pleased with him/her.' While such salutations are not set out in the text for readability, we encourage readers to offer these prayers as if set out in full.

Dr. Mufti Muhammad Sadiq (1872-1957) was the first Ahmadiyya Muslim missionary to arrive in America. In 1921, he founded the *Muslim Sunrise*, which stands today as the longest running Muslim publication in America. The magazine seeks to open discussions on Islam and topics relating to religion in general. It highlights the role of Islam in an ever changing global society. It provides a platform for public opinion on contemporary issues and presenting their solutions from an Islamic perspective.

www.muslimsunrise.com

In This Issue

Features

10 Education in America

Contrasting private v. public and religious v. secular

12 A Muslim's Journey into Politics

15 Religion and Politics

A delicate balance for an Islamic State

18 Health Care in Islam

Responsibilities of the State

20 Economic Stability in Islam

Fundamental economic principles

23 Religion in Education

Are we going too far?

25 Taxation in Islam

27 Fundamentals of Leadership

29 Democracy in Islam

32 Khilafat's Message to Parliament

An historic address in the UK

34 Muslims in a non-Muslim State

Departments

5 Opening Commentary

6 Editorial

7 Friday Sermon

Allah is *Razzaq* - The Provider



Winter 2008 • Volume 88 • Issue 4

29 Q & A

Spirituality or organized religion?

31 Poetry Corner

"To Whom it May Concern..."

45 Perspective

"Hail to the Chief..."

News, Views and Reviews

37 Viewpoints

Ahmadi struggle against terror & the economic crisis

38 Press Publications

Obama and the election

39 From the Archives

What is Islam? Muslim Sunrise, 1939

40 Film Review

Obsession - Radical Islam's war against the West

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

From the Holy Qur'an

Chapter 2:279-282

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَذَرُوا مَا بَقِيَ مِنَ الرِّبَا إِن كُنْتُمْ
مُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٢٧٩﴾ فَإِن لَّمْ تَفْعَلُوا فَأْذَنُوا بِحَرْبٍ مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ
وَإِن تَبْتَغُوا فَلََكُمْ رَأْسُ أَمْوَالِكُمُ لَا تَظْلِمُونَ وَلَا تُظْلَمُونَ ﴿٢٨٠﴾
وَإِن كَانَ ذُو عُسْرَةٍ فَنَظِرَةٌ إِلَىٰ مَيْسَرَةٍ وَأَن تَصَدَّقُوا خَيْرٌ
لَّكُمْ إِن كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٢٨١﴾ وَاتَّقُوا يَوْمًا تُرْجَعُونَ فِيهِ إِلَى اللَّهِ
تُؤْتَوْنَ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ مَّا كَسَبَتْ وَهُمْ لَا يُظْلَمُونَ ﴿٢٨٢﴾

O ye who believe! Fear Allah and give up what remains of interest, if you are truly believers. But if you do it not, then beware of war from Allah and His Messenger; and if you repent, then you shall have your principal; thus you shall not wrong nor shall you be wronged. And if the debtor be in straitened circumstances, then grant him respite till a time of ease. And that you remit it as charity shall be better for you, if you only knew. And guard yourselves against the day when you shall be made to return to Allah; then shall every soul be paid in full what it has earned; and they shall not be wronged.

From the writings of the Promised Messiah

Gog & Magog

Y*ajuj* [Gog] and *Majuj* [Magog] are two peoples who have been mentioned in earlier scriptures. The reason why they are so called is that they make extensive use of *Ajij* [fire], and would reign supreme on earth and dominate every height. At the same time, a great change will be ordained from heaven and will usher in days of peace and amity. [Lecture Sialkot, Ruhani Khaza'in, vol. 20, p. 211]

I have also proved that it is of Gog and Magog. Since *Ajij*, from which the words Gog and Magog are derived, means 'fire', God Almighty has disclosed to me that Gog and Magog are a people who are greater experts in the use of fire than any other people. Their very names indicate that their ships, trains and machines will be run by fire. They will fight their battles with fire. They will excel all other people in harnessing fire to their service. This is why they will be called Gog and Magog. These are the people of the West, as they are unique in their expertise in the use of fire. In Jewish scriptures too it was the people of Europe who were described as Gog and Magog. Even the name of Moscow, which is the ancient capital of Russia, is mentioned. Thus it was preordained that the Promised Messiah would appear in



Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (1835-1908)

the time of Gog and Magog. [Ayyam-us-Sulh, Ruhani Khaza'in, vol. 14, pp. 424-425]

On the one hand, it is proved from the Bible that the Christians of Europe are Gog and Magog, and on the other, the Holy Qur'an has mentioned specific signs concerning Gog and Magog which can only be applied to European powers, as for instance, it is written that they will scale every height, i.e., they will overcome all other powers and be supreme in all worldly matters. Similarly, it is also mentioned in the *Ahadith* that no country will be able to stand up to them. Thus it is conclusively established that these powers are Gog and Magog. To deny this is sheer obstinacy and opposition to God's Word. Who can deny that in accordance

with the Word of God Almighty and the explanation of the Holy Prophet^{saw}, these are the people who, in their worldly power, are superior to every other people. They have no equal in the art of war and statecraft. Their inventions and machines have established new patterns, both in war and in worldly comforts and luxuries. They have brought about an amazing revolution in the culture of mankind and have displayed such mastery in statecraft and in providing equipment for war and peace, as has no parallel since the creation of the world.

Thus, centuries after the prophecy of the Holy Prophet^{saw}, the rise of European powers is the event in accordance with the sign specified in his prophecy. As God has disclosed the meaning of Gog and Magog and events have proven that a certain people fit the signs that have been mentioned, refusal to acknowledge this would be denial of an established verity. No one can stop a person from persisting in his denial, but every just-minded one who is a seeker after truth would, on being informed of all these particulars, testify with full confidence that these people are Gog and Magog. [Chashma-e-Ma'rifat, Ruhani Khaza'in, vol. 23, pp. 83-88]

Editorial

November 4, 2008 was an historical day for America. United States voters elected their President in a way that was historic in many ways. The President

Elect is the son of an African Muslim. His name is a Muslim name and the middle name, Hussein, which is recognizable as Muslim even for people who have no knowledge or interaction with Islam. He was also educated in his early years in a Muslim country, Indonesia. He is a Christian, of course, and had to clarify and assure the voters that he definitely has never been and is not currently a Muslim. In a predominantly Christian nation of the United States where the Christian Right is a powerful political force, electing him certainly is an historical event. In our country, where the word Muslim has become synonymous with the word terrorist, it is a tribute to the American voters and the system of democracy that is in place.

During the election process, many issues were debated and discussed such

as public education, universal healthcare, national security and women's rights. However, at the end of the campaigns, the state of the economy became the overwhelming issue.

Islam, being a universal and practical religion, offers solutions to all of the issues facing humanity from time to time.



In the current issue, we have attempted to present the Islamic point of view on most of these issues facing our nation.

The most concerning issue of economy is a complicated one. In a sophisticated economic system, there cannot be quick, easy and simple solutions. Islam does offer the basics on which our economy can be based to avoid the deep recessions and inflations. It offers an interest free economic system, a simpler way of life and limitations and guidance on how we spend our money.

Regardless of the band-aid solutions

that are and would be suggested by the leaders, we need to get back to the basic principles of life. Over-indulgence, overspending, living beyond our means, and greed based trade are all parts of the causes of the economic problems we face. Social problems such as high number of divorces, single parents and separated family units result in increased number of households and put additional economic requirements on the society. The social issues not only affect the moral fabric of our society but also have deep devastating effects on the economy.

Our newly elected president has promised "change." Let us pray that it does not just mean a change of the

political party running our government. Let us hope and pray that the "change" we seek is in the fundamentals of how we live our lives: simpler way of life, living within our means, helping and sharing with the poor and the needy. It would be a real "change" if our politicians would work with their focus on serving the citizens and not go astray on the path dictated by the desire to be re-elected.

If we can adopt these fundamental principles, that would be a "change" that would really make history.

*“Have they not seen
that Allah enlarges
the provision for
whomsoever He
pleases, and straitens
it for whomsoever He
pleases?”*

Allah is Razzaq (The Provider)

**Summary of Friday Sermon
Delivered by Hadhrat Mirza
Masroor Ahmad ^{aba}, the Head of
the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community
October 31st, 2008**

*NOTE: Alislam Team takes full
responsibility for any errors or
miscommunication in this Synopsis of the
Friday Sermon*

“Have they not seen that Allah enlarges the provision for whomsoever He pleases, and straitens it for whomsoever He pleases? In that are Signs for a people who believe. So give to the kinsman his due, and to the needy and to the wayfarer. That is best for those who seek the favour of Allah, and it is they who will prosper. Whatever you pay as interest that it may increase the wealth of the people, it does not increase in the sight of Allah; but whatever you give in Zakat seeking the favor of Allah-it is these who will increase *their wealth* manifold. It is Allah Who has created you, *and* then He has provided for you; then He will cause you to die, *and* then He will bring you to life. Is there any of your ‘partners’ who can do these things? Glorified be He and exalted above that which they associate *with Him*.” (30:38 - 41)



Hadhrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad ^{aba}

Huzoor (aba) recited these verses after Surah Al Fatihah and opened today's sermon by reminding us that Allah is Razzaq i.e. The Provider. He it is Who causes wealth to increase or to decrease. A true believer is never troubled by these ups and downs; in fact it is a source of progress in his faith when God manifests this attribute by His grace.

The financial crisis has enveloped the entire world these days. All nations of the world, the developed and the underdeveloped countries alike, are trapped in this tangled web. Some countries that previously enjoyed strong economic conditions, so much so that they believed they could rule the world because they possessed the most advanced technologies (science, food, weapons, medicine) and other nations would

forever be dependent on them for their own existence, are seeing their economy break down before their eyes. The truth of the matter is that these economies were based on frail policies which have collapsed, resulting in a global economic crisis. The true controller indeed is God, but these superpower nations fail to acknowledge this fact. The solutions they are now coming up with to save their economy are again not long-lasting, nor reliable. The real solution lies only in gaining nearness to God and following His teachings. Unfortunately, the Muslims nations are also involved in similar practices instead of following the guidelines laid out in the Holy Quran and these nations have no sense of guilt or shame. The heads of these countries are extremely selfish and are interested in filling their personal bank accounts. Middle Eastern countries (oil-rich nations) managed to build the most modern infrastructure for themselves, but they did not use their resources as God has commanded i.e. to help the poorer Muslim nations. Instead, they have been investing their profits and excess wealth in Western countries so that they may accumulate interest on their deposits. On the other hand, they developed a system of Islamic banking for display purposes in their own countries, which in fact is just a sugar-coated label given to the same system of interest and usury and does not follow the true Quranic teachings.

Allah, The Provider, admonishes the believers to spend on their relatives, on the poor and on the wayfarer, in order to gain the pleasure of Allah and to prosper spiritually and materially as well. A true believer is not one who merely utters empty words from his mouth, but he is one who has firm faith in God, Who provides for all his needs, and he out of his earnings spends according to the will of God. In light of this, we must remember that a Muslim is a brother of another Muslim. Similarly, Muslim nations are duty-bound that they should help other underprivileged Muslim nations and not regard this help as charity, but as a fulfillment of their religious responsibility. Had the wealthy Muslim nations fulfilled this responsibility instead of investing in western countries to earn interest, they would have earned the pleasure of God, but they failed to do so and are now suffering the adverse affects of the global economic crisis.

Huzoor (aba) then explained in simple words the root cause of this economic crisis, pointing to the fact that the lending institutions in the western countries actually use funds deposited by their wealthy clients and



Allah says that those who use interest as a form of income are similar to those who are smitten with insanity by Satan (2:276)

forward this money as loans to those wishing to buy homes and other personal items. The money is scarcely loaned out for productive projects, which would actually render the economy stronger by creating more resources. These loans are handed out on easy terms (such as low down payments, and in some cases, 0% deposits). The borrower does not pay attention to the amount of money he will be paying in interest during the term of the contract. Since his income is limited, and he has to run the household along with repaying the loan, he finds himself sinking deeper into the abyss of debt, making it impossible for him to repay the loans in certain cases. When the repayments from such clients stopped, banks stopped lending money because funds were no longer readily available. The result is a global economic crisis. Any country that claims they are unaffected by this crisis (such as some Middle Eastern countries have claimed) are making false statements, firstly because their foreign investments have diminished in value and secondly because the worth of the natural resource they are so reliant upon i.e. oil has also diminished greatly. A recent editorial entitled “Sea of debt” stated that the US economy has plunged to such depths that an easy recovery is impossible. In fact, the entire world is facing a similar situation. In the

US, the excessive use of credit card had spoilt the individuals to the extent that they were involved in reckless spending. Now that funds are not so readily available and there are more restrictions from credit card companies, these individuals are refraining themselves from spending. Car sales have plummeted to a record low and air travel is on the decline. This has resulted in decreased consumption of fuel which has caused the oil prices to fall. In addition, individuals are spending less on all that comes under the umbrella of personal entertainment, which again will result in the rise of depression (i.e. mental health will be compromised).

Therefore, Allah says that those who use interest as a form of income are similar to those who are smitten with insanity by Satan (2:276). At another place, Allah has declared interest to be “haram” (unlawful). Use of interest causes one to fall into a vicious cycle, making it extremely difficult to break oneself away from it. Huzoor (aba) quoted a joke at this point: “If my neighbor loses his job, it is recession. If I lose my job, it is depression.” This joke only points to the present detrimental global situation, where thousands upon thousands of jobs have been lost. Huzoor (aba) cautioned the world in strong words, saying that if there is an iota of sense left in you, abandon the use of interest. Instead, invest in trades that are Islamically viable, suggesting that Muslim nations should take lead in this. Huzoor (aba) then gave the example of countries such as Pakistan and other African nations, where the heads of the countries have become extremely corrupt and disloyal to their countries, adding fuel to fire. Such nations have been surviving on loans from wealthier countries, but have no clue as to how these loans are to be repaid. These countries are blessed with natural resources, but it has become their shameless practice to beg for funds time and time again. The truth of the matter is that they have forgotten the teachings of God Almighty and will incur a greater wrath of God. Huzoor (aba) said that the system of interest/usury creates an ever-widening gap between the rich and the poor, but the Islamic system i.e. the system of Zakat creates harmony among all members of a society. Huzoor (aba) advised that everyone, and more specifically the Muslims should stop taking loans; this will prevent from such economic crises to recur every few years.

In the verses recited at the beginning of the sermon, Huzoor (aba) reminded that Allah did not only create us but promised to pro-

vide for His creation, on the condition that we follow His commandments. The instability and frustration and the sense of imminent war that exists in the world today is a result of the wealth of the world revolving only among the privileged few, whereas the underprivileged can view them only from a distance, never securing a share for themselves. Another reason for the destruction of world peace also stems from the fact that the richer nations have been eyeing the natural resources of the underdeveloped countries to be used for their own benefit. Islamic traditions strongly condemn this. Huzoor (aba) said that the world must understand the following golden rules to put a stop to such economic crises:

1. Learn to stay within your means, at a personal and a national level. Be content with what you can easily afford and do not be dazzled with bigger houses and bigger cars forcing yourselves into the system of debt.

2. Refrain from interest/usury.

3. Wealthy nations should abstain from trying to gain control over natural resources of other countries. The underprivileged countries should have the confidence that their resources will be used for the benefit of their country only even when there is international intervention.

4. Heads of nation should be loyal and patriotic to their country.

5. The rights and obligations of poor must be fulfilled.

These rules are based on Islamic teachings, therefore it is Islam that presents the most sound solution to the crises the world faces today. Huzoor (aba) said that Taqwa is a must if you wish to prosper. There is no salvation if we do not pay heed to the Word of God and believe in the Imam of the day. Huzoor (aba) read out from the writings of the Promised Messiah (as) where he has reminded us that we should be grateful to Allah Almighty that He has blessed us by revealing the spiritual light that we so desperately need for our salvation in this day and age. Huzoor (aba) prayed that may Allah guide the world to the right path and enable them to practice the true teachings of Islam, Ameen.

Sayings of the Holy Prophet Muhammad

Subject: Good Behavior

■ Good behavior is half the faith.

■ There is no greater wisdom than foresight, no greater piety than abstention from evil and no greater goodness than good behavior.

■ One who has been given a portion of kindness has been given a portion of that which is best in this world and in the Hereafter. Strengthening the ties of kinship, good behavior and good neighborliness makes towns flourish and lengthen the days of the people.

■ Allah has revealed to me that you should conduct yourselves with humility towards one another so that no one transgresses against another, nor boasts of any superiority over another.

■ Virtue is good behavior and sin is that which troubles your mind and you would not like it to be generally known.

■ Be courteous and consort with the poor and humble. This will exalt you in the sight of Allah and will guard you against pride and arrogance.

■ When a person who is honored among his people visits you, receive him with honor.

■ Two things savor of disbelief: ridiculing a person's descent and bewailing the dead.

“Education in America:” *emphasis/ importance in society; public v private schools; religious education in schools*

By Mansoura Sirajee

Epicetus was right when he asserted, “Only the educated are free.” Indeed, according to the CIA World Factbook, the United States – a country that prides itself on being a nation of freedom—has a literacy rate of 99%. Worldwide the number is fairly sizeable as well—the world literacy rate is 82%.

Undoubtedly, education has had an immense impact on society. Muslims in particular have made significant contributions to the world of learning (Algebra, for example, comes from the Arabic word *Al Jabr* which means “reunion”). The Holy Prophet Muhammad (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) urged his followers to “seek knowledge from the cradle to the grave.” Acquiring knowledge and then implementing that knowledge are crucial obligations of a Muslim because true faith comes with understanding why we believe what we believe. Interestingly enough, the first word revealed of the Qur’an was *Iqra* which means *read!*

Our capacity and determination to learn propels much of our daily existence. For this reason, education in any great society is one of the greatest passions and concerns. It would be safe to say that the content and extent of our education truly marks us as a community.

Education in the United States can be acquired in three ways: public, private, and homeschooling. In recent years, the debate about which type of schooling is best (mostly between private vs. public) has intensified as each side highlight their merits.

The common assumption is that private schools will be able to provide a superior education. However, a study by the National Center for Education Statistics released in 2006 that took into account students’ backgrounds told a different story. Public school students in fourth and eighth grade scored almost as well or better in reading and math, except that private school students excelled in eighth-grade reading.

A Harvard University study challenged the results, using the same data but different methods. Researchers found that private schools



came out ahead in 11 of 12 comparisons of students.

Obviously, the debate over which schools do a better job is far from settled.

One fundamental difference between public and private schools that is important to note are the curriculums. Public schools must follow all federal, state and local laws in educating children. Private schools, on the other hand, are not subject to as many state and federal regulations as public schools. Since private schools are funded independently, they are not subject to the limitations of state education budgets and have more freedom in designing curriculum and instruction (this explains why—according to a study from the University of Minnesota— in private high schools, most students were taught both creationism and evolution versus in public schools, most students were only taught evolution).

Here the question of the extent of freedom of religion in public versus private schools arises. The First Amendment contains two elements regarding religion and government. The establishment clause states that “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion” (ie, Great Britain has an established church that is officially supported by the government. This is unconstitutional in the United States). The free exercise clause prohibits the abridgement of citizens’ freedom to worship – or not worship—as they please. Sometimes these freedoms conflict.

Debate is especially intense over aid to church-affiliated schools and prayer in public schools. The Supreme Court has allowed religiously affiliated colleges and universities to use public funds to build buildings and provide students with textbooks and computers. Public funds cannot, however, be used to pay teacher salaries or field trip transportation.

School prayer is perhaps the most controversial religious issue. Of course, it is not unconstitutional to pray in public schools. Students may pray individually as they wish. What the Constitution does forbid is the encouragement of prayer by public school authorities. For example, school-sponsored prayer at a public school graduation violates the constitutional separation of church and state.

Many people, nonetheless, mistakenly believe that religion has no place in the public school curriculum. This is not true. According to the Supreme Court, religion can be taught, as long as the teaching is presented “objectively as part of a secular program of education.” In essence, educators cannot teach religion, but they can teach *about* religion.

In truth, seeking knowledge is not a contemporary objective. The Holy Prophet of Islam (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) is reported to have said, “He who travels in the search of knowledge, to him God shows the way of Paradise.” May Allah give us the strength to constantly seek knowledge. *Rabbi zidnee illma* (O Lord, increase me in knowledge).

The Hajj: Pilgrimage to Mecca

The fifth act of Islamic worship is the performing of the Hajj or the pilgrimage to Mecca. A Muslim must perform this pilgrimage at least once in his lifetime if economic and political conditions are favorable. The focal point of this pilgrimage is the Ka'aba, which was rebuilt by Prophet Abraham some 4,000 years ago. Today, the Ka'aba stands in the middle of a large courtyard of Masjid al Haram or the Sacred Mosque. The courtyard of Masjid al Haram contains, besides Ka'aba, the Maqam a Ibrahim and the fountain of Zamzam.

The Hajj is performed during the Muslim month of Dhul Hijjah, which comes two months after the festival of Eidul Fitr. The various ceremonies of the Hajj include:

1. Entering into the state of ihram by wearing only two seamless white sheets. This is done by the pilgrims when they reach certain designated places close to Mecca.

2. Saying of talbiyah starting at the place where the ihram is worn. Talbiyah consists of saying aloud the following:

*Here we come, O God,
here we come No partner
have You, here we come.
Indeed, praise and blessings
are Yours, and the Kingdom
too No partner have You,
here we come*

3. On entering Mecca, the pilgrims perform the first tawaf, which consists of going around the Ka'aba seven times in an anticlockwise direction.

4. After completing the tawaf, the pilgrims perform the sa'yy which consists of running between the two little hills of Safa



and Marwa located near the Ka'aba. These are the two hills where Hajirah (wife of prophet Abraham) ran in search of water when he had to leave her there on Divine command.

5. After performing the sa'yy, the pilgrims move to Mina, a plain located about four miles east of Mecca, and spend the night there.

6. Next morning, the pilgrims leave for the Plain of Arafat located nine miles southeast of Mecca. They arrive there in the early afternoon, say the combined Zuh and Asr Prayers and listen to a sermon given by the Imam. The pilgrims stay in the Plain of Arafat only till sunset. This is the same plain where the Prophet Muhammad delivered his farewell sermon.

7. After sunset the pilgrims leave Arafat and come to a place called Muzdalifah. In the Holy Quran, this place is referred to as al Mash'ar al Haram, the Sacred Monument. On reaching Muzdalifah, the pilgrims say their combined Maghrib and Isha Prayers and spend the night there. In the morning, after saying the Fajr Prayer, the pilgrims return to Mina once again.

8. The pilgrims reach Mina on the tenth day of Dhul Hijjah. This is the busiest day of the pilgrimage. The first ceremony that is performed at Mina is the throwing of small stones or ramy al jimar. In this ceremony the pilgrims throw stones at three pillars in a symbolic act of striking the devil.

9. The tenth day of Dhul Hijjah is also the day when pilgrims sacrifice their animals. This day is also celebrated all over the Muslim world as the festive day of Eid al Adha.

10. After performing the sacrifice the pilgrims have their heads shaved or their hair clipped. After this they emerge from the state of ihram by wearing their everyday clothes.

11. Clad in their everyday clothes the pilgrims perform another tawaf of the Ka'aba. This tawaf is called tawaf e ziarat.

12. Before the tenth day of Dhul Hijjah ends, the pilgrims perform another sa'yy between the hills of Safa and Marwa.

13. After this the pilgrims return once again to Mina where they stay until the twelfth or thirteenth day of Dhul Hijjah. During these two or three days the pilgrims continue to perform the ceremony of ramy al jimar or throwing of stones.

14. On the afternoon of the twelfth Dhul Hijjah (or of the thirteenth) the pilgrims return to Mecca for the last ceremony of the pilgrimage. This ceremony consists of the farewell tawaf of the Ka'aba after which the entire pilgrimage is completed and the pilgrims are free to go wherever they wish.

Although not part of the prescribed pilgrimage, many pilgrims carry on to Medina and visit Masjid al Nabvi or the Prophet's Mosque. It was in the compound of this Mosque that Prophet Muhammad was buried.

While the Hajj may only be performed during the prescribed dates of the month of Dhul Hijjah, a Lesser Pilgrimage called Umrah may be made individually at any time during the year.

A Muslim's journey into American Politics

By Abdul Shukoor

My 1998 political run for the Maryland House of Delegates was an effort to better serve my community. As an immigrant who had come to the United States 10 years earlier with hardly any roots in the community, this was an exhilarating learning experience. I had come to this country with *the American Dream*, seeking opportunities in education and financial security.

In 1991, just after 3 years of my migration, I served as the President of the Ahmadiyya Youth Association. This opportunity to serve the youth group of men between the ages of 7 to 40 was a turning point in my life. My primary responsibility was to ensure the moral and spiritual well-being of the membership through various activities. Also, the youth group was fairly active in the Washington DC area in community service and social projects. We played a key role in administering a winter homeless shelter for about a week with a group

of churches in Laurel, Maryland. In 1994, our youth group was apparently the only local Muslim group who assisted Bosnian refugees who fled the civil war in Bosnia. We teamed up with the Lutheran Social Services and began helping about 40 refugees with transportation to jobs, identifying job opportunities, running their errands, fundraising and providing basic needs like bedding, desks, chairs, electronics, food and medicine. We did this for about 18 months and our youth group was instrumental in making a big difference in the lives of those refugees. During this time, we also established excellent contacts with other churches and also the Muslim Community Center of Silver Spring, Maryland.

In 1994, the Ahmadi Muslim community was severely persecuted in Pakistan and we launched a vigorous campaign to reach out to our elected officials in an effort led by our Imam Mubasher Ahmed. As a youth leader, I played a key role in letter writing campaigns and contacting several elected officials in the Washington area.

The experiences of our community's persecution and the displacement of Bosnians had an immense impact on me. At that time I was pursuing my Master's Degree in Information Systems. About 14 years ago, there were not many Muslims who were active in politics and we did not have any elected officials. Every immigrant was opting to be an Engineer or Physician and there were few who were moving towards Law. I wanted to do something different which could have a positive

impact and I discovered it in Politics. Politics appealed to me as an opportunity to serve and become a voice for my community and communities who were voiceless. I tried to get into Law School but my LSAT scores were not high enough. I was able to get into a Master's program in Public Policy at American University. This is how I entered politics and the doors it opened to serve and do something different that no one in my community had done before.

Now, in 2008, we have several elected Muslim officials including Congressman Keith Ellison of Minnesota and Congressman Andre Carson of Indiana. We also have an elected official in the House of Delegates from Maryland, who was elected in 2006.

In my view, seeking a public office is a demonstration of your commitment to serve your fellow citizens. These positions require you to work long hours away from the family to attend events in the evenings and are not highly paid. Most public servants drive an immense satisfaction by making a huge difference to their constituents.

How does one get started in Politics/Public Service?

First of all, public service is not really a profession or career. It does not provide the security of job and continuous compensation to take care of your basic needs. Individuals who seek elected office do have regular jobs as teachers, insurance agents, lawyers, doctors, businessmen, drivers or accountants. A lot of elected positions are part-time and many



of them are paid only transportation allowances etc. (e.g., if you are a councilmember of a smaller town).

These are the essential attributes of entering public service:

- Desire to help people
- Willingness by your spouse/family to devote time and efforts
- Willingness to learn and understand issues which impact constituents/citizens
- Willingness to raise money and campaign
- Not Afraid to lose

How can you serve in a non-elected position?

There are several positions in smaller towns, school boards, counties and states which are called committees, commissions, task forces and citizen advisory groups. Any individual can contact their respective jurisdiction and ask for the list of these groups and vacancies. They are all volunteers and this would be a good way to learn, network and resume build before seeking an elective office.

As a resident of the city of Bowie, Prince Georges County and state of Maryland, I have the following opportunities:

- City of Bowie
(20 Boards/Committees with about 7 members each)
- <http://www.msa.md.gov/msa/mdmanual/26excom/html/00list.html>
- Prince Georges County
(55 Boards/Committees with about 12 members each)
- [http://www.princegeorgescountymd.gov/Government/BoardsCommissions/index.asp?nivel=subfoldmenu\(0,0\)](http://www.princegeorgescountymd.gov/Government/BoardsCommissions/index.asp?nivel=subfoldmenu(0,0))
- State of Maryland
(300 Boards/Committees with about 12 members each)
- <http://www.msa.md.gov/msa/mdmanual/26excom/html/00list.html>



One needs to be extremely focused and creative in order to get attention of constituents.

What elected office one can seek?

One can get started from a local town/city councilmember and gradually move up. This would be the best way as this helps one to learn/understand from the ground up. If you are a resident of Falls Church, Fairfax county and Virginia, you can seek any of the following offices:

City Councilmember of Falls Church
Mayor of Falls Church
School Board of Fairfax County
County Commissioner of Fairfax County
County Supervisor or County Executive of Fairfax County
State Attorney for Fairfax County
House of Delegates (State of Virginia)
State Senate (State of Virginia)

Attorney General (State of Virginia)
Lt. Governor (State of Virginia)
Governor (State of Virginia)
House of Representative (US)
Senator (US)
President

Road Map to Elective Office

In order to get elected in a two way race, a candidate needs 50% plus 1 vote. In a 3-way or 4-way race, all you need is the highest votes. In some states, counties and cities one is required to have 50% plus 1 one vote. In this situation, a run-off takes place between the top two candidates with the highest votes.

The road to an elective office depends from race to race. Presidential campaigns, gubernatorial campaigns (for Governors) and local campaigns are run differently from one another.

How to get elected to City Council:

One needs to be extremely focused and creative in order to get attention of constituents. These are some simple steps:

- Determine when city council elections are in your city. Understand issues in your city by reading the newspaper and attend open-forum city council meetings.

- Join a sub-committee on your city council, such as a neighborhood association or small business association. Work on getting your voice heard at council meetings. Network yourself to city government officials to get your views and opinions heard.

- Research who is on the city council at the current moment and what their platform issues are. Learn from popular city council members and what they do to keep getting elected.

- Pull together a small campaign team: primarily a campaign manager and a treasurer to keep the details of your campaign funds. Acquire a voter file and identify supporters if possible.

- Section off parts of your city that contain a large population of the voters.

- Identify likely voters - not every registered voter votes in an election.

- Visit door to door to introduce yourself with good information about you and the your views on the issues.

- Send a thank you note within 24 hours after you meet them at their door.

- Out communicate your opponent.

- Have best operations on election day covering all polling places and good supporters.

- Have community leaders campaigning for you on precincts so that they could sway the undecided in your favor.

Three Important aspects of campaigns:

Money: It takes money to get the message out.

Time: It requires a lot of time to meet hundreds and thousands of people.

Commitment: It requires a change in your routine and how badly you want to get elected.

- In 2000, Vice President Al Gore raised \$95.5 million and Governor Bush raised \$48.1 million

in primaries and public financing was restricted to \$67.56 million in the general election.

In 1996, President Clinton raised \$42.5 million and Senator Dole (R) raised \$44.6 million in primaries and public financing was restricted to \$61.82 million.

- An average US Senate candidate needs to raise a minimum of \$1.9 million to be competitive.

- An average US House of Representative candidate needs to raise a minimum of \$498,000 to be competitive.

- An average State Senate candidate needs to raise \$250,000 to be competitive.

- An average House of Delegates candidate needs to raise \$100,000 to be competitive.

About 80% of the money in campaigns is spent on Media (e.g., TV/Radio/Internet/Print).

Faith, Issues & Party Affiliation

We have the following parties in the United States which are recognized by States and in federal elections:

- Democrat
- Republican
- Libertarian
- Green
- Constitutional

You could also run as an independent. However, as an independent candidate, you are required to get signatures while filing your candidacy. Most of the candidates align themselves with either the Democratic Party or Republican party. One needs to align himself/herself in that column which makes it easier to contest.

One of the greatest challenges for a person of faith is his/her faith and its teachings/injunctions with the ideals of his/her party. It was fairly simple for me to separate my faith and the role of a public official or a candidate seeking to represent 99.5% of the people who do not share my faith. For example, as a Democrat, I strongly and unequivocally sup-

port Roe V. Wade and a women's right to choose a safe and legal abortion, regardless of ability to pay and oppose any and all efforts to weaken or undermine this right as a public policy for the greater good of my constituents who do not share my faith. Similarly, a lot of elected officials particularly Catholics are conflicted on the issue of abortion, death penalty and the lottery.

As a practicing Muslim and a candidate I presented the best of my faith and did not impose those injunctions/principles which may not be accepted in a democratic society so that you could establish a good will and govern without being heavy handed.

In western countries, particularly in the United States and Canada, there is hardly any barrier for anyone to enter into politics. We have seen in recent years, we had Mitt Romney (Former Governor of Massachusetts) ran for the President. Senator Hillary Clinton came very close to getting the nomination of the Democratic Party. Governor Sarah Palin, being a woman, did not have any problem being a vice-presidential candidate from representing the Republican ticket. Now, we have the first African American President Elect Barack Obama in 2008.

I believe in 2012 we will have our first Asian Indian American (Governor Bobby Jindal of Louisiana) to contend for the Republican Party nomination. I dreamt of being the first Muslim state legislator in Maryland. We already have one now and there are several others who are considering running in 2010. I am pretty sure that those of us who are in our early 30's and 40's will see a Muslim candidate seeking the highest office of the presidency in our lifetime.

Shukoor Ahmed ran for Maryland House of Delegates in 1998 and 2006. He played a key role in the 2000, 2004 and 2006 Presidential Campaigns. He currently serves on two state commissions. He is an entrepreneur and currently serves as the CEO of V-Empower, Inc. He has assisted and/or mentored over 20 candidates in the last 10 years. He can be contacted at Shukoor62@yahoo.com

Religion and politics in Islam

By Sardar Anees Ahmad

President James Madison's pen breathed life into a notion as unappreciated as it is weighty. The words nurtured a new nation and etched perhaps the most fundamental law out of which the American story unfolds: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof." This portion of the First Amendment of America's Constitution has to a great extent, as Jon Meacham remarked, shaped rather than strangled America.¹ Madison may have been surprised to know that he was reviving the Islamic ideals recorded eleven centuries earlier by the Holy Prophet Muhammad.^{SAW}

To President James Madison and his most talented countryman President Thomas Jefferson, we owe enormous gratitude. Thanks are due because a secular legal code is independent of, not anti, religion – keeping religion out of government and government out of religion. Secularism's European cousin, laicism, has also attempted to create a political arena free of religious influence. Laicism has in certain areas, however, manifested anti-religious overtones, preventing individual religious expression in the name of preserving a secular whole. This is not to say that America's version of secularism has no weaknesses, but the hostility towards religion is not as prevalent.

Thanks are also due because secularism protects and promotes an array of ideologies, thereby fostering the growth of a tolerant society. Because of its appeal to universal principles, secularism is a transcendent, and consequently progressive, political philosophy. It is perhaps the most crucial ingredient in America's growth, the most ethnically and culturally dynamic nation in history.

Historically, however, the separation of church and state is not a solely American ideal. It may surprise the reader that I do not refer to Martin Luther or John Locke, but to Prophet Muhammad^{SAW}. While Islam and America were founded more than eleven centuries apart,



Prophet Muhammad^{SAW} and the Founding Fathers shared the same vision of a tolerant and pluralistic nation.

That the Bill of Rights guarantees freedom of religious expression and its simultaneous debarment from the political arena, we already know. What legal code, however, can be both secular and Islamic? The answer lies in both the Qur'an, and the Charter of Medina.

Secularism in Islam

Before explaining why secularism is Islamic, we must understand why theocracy is not. Firstly, a relationship between man and God, based upon trust and love, can never be imposed upon anyone. Second, with more than seventy-three different Islamic sects extant today, which interpretation of Islam do the clergy suggest we impose upon ourselves, let alone the non-Muslims? Perhaps, as some clergy argue, *Shariah* Law should at the very least be implemented in a nation with a majority Muslim populace. Perhaps, then, America can impose *Canon* Law on its citizens. Ultimately, the clergy's unlettered approach would have us employ "Godly" principles to create a Godless society.

Of America, Prof. John Esposito writes, "America's separation of church and state was to assure that no specific religious denomination be given special preference and that both belief and unbelief have equal protection and space."² In contrast to today's "Islamic" na-

tions, Prophet Muhammad^{SAW} undertook a strikingly similar approach during his rule of Medina, and later the whole of Arabia.

While much is said of the supposedly horrid living conditions of *dhimmis* (i.e. protected non-Muslims), their living standards were at par, and oftentimes better than that of the Muslims. The Charter of Medina, often cited as the world's first true constitution, recognized all of Medina's citizens, irrespective of religious bent, to form "one community."³ Religious freedom was granted to all non-Muslims, in particular the Jews: "The Jews ... are one community with the believers (the Jews have their religion and the Muslims have theirs), their freedmen and their persons except those who behave unjustly and sinfully, for they hurt but themselves and their families."⁴ This blind tolerance of religion is drawn directly from the Qur'an, "Say, 'O ye disbelievers! I worship not as you worship, nor do you worship as I worship. Nor do I worship those that you worship, nor do you worship Him Whom I worship. For you your religion, and for me my religion'" (109:2-7).

Yes, the Charter of Medina twice refers to Prophet Muhammad^{SAW} as "the prophet of God." This proves that under Islamic law and governance, citizens were granted religious freedom as a fundamental right.

The Qur'an repeatedly states⁵ that the Muslims, including Prophet Muhammad^{SAW}, can only admonish non-Muslims regarding religious matters: "Admonish, therefore, for thou art but an

admonisher; Thou art not appointed a keeper over them” (88:22-23). The Qur’an mentions disbelief more than 150 times, yet in every instance the authority to punish the disbeliever rests with God Alone. Again, the Qur’an further reiterates religious freedom: “There is no compulsion in religion; Surely, the right way has become distinct from error” (2:257).

Furthermore, the Qur’an is replete with verses⁶ that forbid any human from punishing an individual from accepting, and later recanting, his faith – regardless of the number of times they do so. For example, the Qur’an states, “Those who believe, then disbelieve, then again believe, then disbelieve and then increase in disbelief, Allah will never forgive them nor will He guide them to the right way” (4:138).

As a practical example, once a desert Arab once took the pledge of Islam at Prophet Muhammad’s^{SAW} hand. Later, he twice requested to have his pledge voided, Prophet Muhammad^{SAW} denying his request on both instances. The Arab then left Medina on his own accord unharmed, upon which Prophet Muhammad^{SAW} remarked, “Medina is like a furnace which destroys the dross and purifies the rest.”⁷

Of blasphemy, the Qur’an condemns this divisive act six times,⁸ but forbids man from punishing the blasphemer. In fact, the Qur’an instructs man to quietly disassociate from the company of blasphemers until they change their behavior.⁹ Being a crime against Allah Alone, man has been given no authority to punish the blasphemer.

As an illustration, once a notable citizen of Medina, Abdullah bin Ubayy bin Salul, conspired in spreading a most horrid and cruel lie of adultery against Hadhrat Ayesha, the wife of Prophet Muhammad.^{SAW10} On another occasion, Abdullah bin Ubayy insulted Prophet Muhammad^{SAW} in an attempt to create discord amongst the Muslims of Medina.¹¹ On both of these occasions, he received no punishment. Moreover, on his passing, Prophet Muhammad^{SAW} led his funeral prayer.¹²

On yet another occasion, a group of Jews greeted the Prophet Muhammad^{SAW} with a play on words, *As-Saamu Alaikum* (Death be upon you) instead of *As-Salaamu Alaikum* (Peace be upon you). In reply, Prophet Muhammad^{SAW} simply stated *Wa-Alaikum* (And upon you) and walked on even though his wife was enraged at the insult.¹³ If *dhimmis* did not possess freedom of speech, how would they dare utter such provocative speech towards the person most capable of ordering their execution?

Punishment, even death, is not only war-

ranted, but mandated for any individual, Muslim or non-Muslim, if they threaten national security. It is upon *this* premise alone that blasphemers, apostates, et al were punished under Prophet Muhammad’s^{SAW} governance. Threat to the sanctity of the state and its citizens, *not* the utterance of blasphemy or act of apostasy, earned them this punishment. It is on this premise that the Supreme Court of America also has banned the utterance of inflammatory speech.¹⁴ To insist that the execution of one who seeks to create discord in society was due to his being a blasphemer or apostate is akin to believing that drunk drivers are punished simply because of their owning a car.

Dhimmis also enjoyed all the economic rights guaranteed to Muslims, even exploiting the Muslims’ fairness to gain a higher profit. For example, on settling in Medina the Muslims were in dire need of water and a Jew owned the only well in Medina, known as *Bir Rumah*. Seeing a golden opportunity, the Jew demanded an exorbitant 20,000 dirhams for its purchase, which Hadhrat Uthmaan^{RA}, Prophet Muhammad’s^{SAW} 3rd Caliph, readily paid.¹⁵ As with the issue of speech, if Islam trumped the *dhimmis*’ economic rights, why did the Muslims not simply force the Jew to hand over the well? Muslims certainly had the power to do so.

Objection is also raised against the *Jizya* (i.e. poll tax levied against *dhimmis*). Firstly, it was not as if the Muslims had no tax to pay. Indeed, the *Zakaat* tax was a mandatory tax for the Muslims alone.¹⁶ Moreover, the *Jizya*, which ensured the *dhimmis*’ protection, absolved all *Dhimmis* of military service. If the Muslims could not protect *dhimmis*, the tax was returned.¹⁷ In contrast, today’s nations tax their citizens *and* still leave everyone eligible for military service.

Remember, Prophet Muhammad^{SAW} did indeed consider Islam to be the only complete and perfected code of life.¹⁸ Still, Prophet Muhammad^{SAW} fashioned a successful state on Islamic principles that meets all the criteria of being named a secular state. Regarding the public sphere then, certain aspects of Islamic law are indeed secular.

It is no wonder then that Michael Hart wrote, “My choice of Muhammad to lead the list of the world’s most influential persons may surprise some readers and may be questioned by others, but he was the only man in history who was supremely successful on both the religious and secular levels.”¹⁹

Fortunately, Prophet Muhammad’s^{SAW} timeless example did not die with his passing. For

example, Christian historians acknowledge the remarkable sensitivity with which Hadhrat Umar^{RA}, Prophet Muhammad’s^{SAW} 2nd Caliph, treated non-Islamic religious traditions. Famed Orientalist Sir William Muir writes of Hadhrat Umar’s^{RA} visit to Jerusalem, “Omar accompanied the Patriarch over the city visited the various places of pilgrimage and graciously inquired into their history. At the appointed hour the Patriarch bade the Caliph perform his orisons in the church of the Resurrection where they chanced to be. But he declined to pray either there or in the church of Constantine where a carpet had been spread for him saying kindly that if he did so his followers would take possession of the church for ever as a place where Moslem prayer had once been offered up.”²⁰

Hadhrat Umar^{RA} further accepted every Christian request, except one – he would not permit the Jews to remain banned from Jerusalem as had been the case during the period of Christian rule.²¹ Similar accounts of strict adherence to justice are found during the Caliphate of Hadhrat Abu Bakr^{RA}, Hadhrat Uthmaan^{RA}, and Hadhrat Ali^{RA}, during the era of Moorish Spain, and the Jerusalem of Salah-ud-Din al-Ayyubi.

History, then, bears witness to the accommodating and just political nature of Islam. In the name of religion Prophet Muhammad^{SAW}, and thereafter his devoted followers, established a state guaranteeing, as President Thomas Jefferson envisioned, “freedom for religion, but also freedom from religion”.²² We owe a debt of gratitude to our Founding Fathers for reviving these Islamic ideals and proving their timeless value.

(Footnotes)

1 (Meacham, Jon, *American Gospel*, p. 5)

2 (*The Washington Post* “On Faith” 1/29/2008)

3 (Guillaume, Alfred *The Life of Muhammad: A Translation of Ishaq’s*

Sirat Rasul Allah, Oxford University Press, Karachi, 1955; pp. 231)

4(Ibid, pp. 232-233)

5 (Qur’an 4:64; 6:70-71; 11:47; 50:46)

6 (Qur’an 2:218; 3:73, 91; 5:55; 16:107; 63:4)

7 (*Fathul Bari*, Vol. XXIII, p.173)

8 (Qur’an 4:141, 157; 6:69, 109; 18:6; 60:3; 63:9)

9 (Qur’an 4:141)

10 (Sahih Jami’ *Bukhari*, Vol. III, Book 48 #829)

11 (Ibn Hisham, *Kitab Sirat Rasul Allah*, p. 995)

12 (Sahih Jami’ *Muslim*, Book 38 #6680)

13 (Sahih Jami’ *Bukhari*, Vol. IV, Book 52, #186)

14 (Chaplinsky v. State of New Hampshire, 315 U.S. 568 (1942))

15 (Khalid, Muhammad *Khalid Men Around the Messenger*, p. 25;

History of Islam, p. 380)

16 (Qur’an 2:111); (Sahih Jami’ *Bukhari*, Vol. I, Book 2, #7)

17 (Esposito, John L., *The Oxford Dictionary of Islam*, p. 161)

18 (Qur’an 5:4; 9:33; 48:29; 61:10)

19 (Hart, Michael, *The 100: A Ranking of the Most Influential Persons in History*, p. 3)

20 (Muir, Sir William, *The Caliphate*, p. 145)

21 (Armstrong, Karen, *Jerusalem*)

22 (Edwin S. Gaustad, *Faith of Our Fathers: Religion and the New Nation*, San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987, p. 38)

Health Care in Islam, a religious duty

It is estimated that in America more than 47 million people don't have medical coverage today, and this in an industrialized country that spent \$2.3 trillion on health care in 2007 alone and everybody still doesn't get it!² It is believed that 70% to 80% of all the health care resources are utilized by people subject to the highly preventable causes of obesity and/or smoking.

By Maham Khan

When Hadhrat Umar bin Abdul Aziz^{ra} became Caliph of the Islamic empire in 717 C.E., he appeared to be worried. When asked why, he replied: "Is this not a thing to worry about? I have been entrusted with the welfare of such a vast empire and I would be failing in my duty if I did not rush to the help of a needy person."¹ Herein lies the burden of responsibility that a ruler of a state has to shoulder. For centuries Muslim rulers, especially of the early Islamic empire, had fulfilled their duties towards their people not for the economic prosperity of their state, but because of a religious duty given to them by God. They were to make sure that everyone under their care was benefiting from their governance. Stable employment, decent lodging, good education, as well as medical help, were always considered to be universal rights of the citizen. And as for the underprivileged who could not afford these basic rights, they were in luck! One of the Five Fundamental Pillars of Islam is zaka'at, or almsgiving, and through this fundamental pillar every Muslim becomes obligated to provide for the sick and poor in society. The Holy Prophet^{sa} has said: "Each one of you is a shepherd, and each one of you will be asked about your flock. A ruler also is a shepherd and will be asked about his flock" (Sahih Bukhari).

In tending to his flock, the shepherd makes sure that it gets food, shelter and that it also stays healthy. Hence, the well-being of his subjects is amongst the ruler's foremost responsibilities. If everyone is sound and healthy, then, the economic cycle works well too. People are able to concentrate on a better education and are able to provide for their families. Prosperity and progress comes only with prayer and good health. It is just like what the Holy Prophet^{sa} has said: "Whoever wakes up secure amongst his people, healthy and has food for his day, it is as if the whole world had been gathered for him!" (Tirmidhi).

"Verily Allah enjoins justice, and the doing of good to others, and giving like kindred" - The Holy Qur'an (16:91)



But a glance at America reveals a vastly different picture. About 47 million people don't have medical coverage today, and this in an industrialized country that spent \$2.3 trillion on health care in 2007 alone and everybody still doesn't get it!² It is believed that 70% to 80% of all the health care resources are utilized by people subject to the highly preventable causes of obesity and/or smoking. Most health hazards stem from these two ills and so raise health care costs. The rest of the population that also needs medical help

doesn't get a share in it because it's already being drained by these diseases.³ And these aren't the only problems. Alcoholism and promiscuity have caused a huge strain on the system as well. To make matters worse, the freedom practiced by private insurance companies in charting their own policies has proven disastrous. Their policies deny coverage to the already sick and sometimes, foot the monstrous bills to unsuspecting clients who find it impossible to pay. Furthermore, economists hold that the high cost of health

coverage has led to a drop in the number of insured.

A majority of Americans now think that the health care system needs to be completely revamped, and two-thirds favor a rather socialist view; they want universal health coverage: something that presidential candidate Theodore Roosevelt promised in 1912, to deliver to his country for the first time. And they are still waiting, with the health care system now in shambles. But perhaps, Islam could give them the relief they have been waiting for.

"And the true believers spend in Our cause of whatsoever we Ourselves have bestowed upon them."⁵ Here in the Holy Qur'an, it is advised that all that is required is that you should spend something of that which God has given you.⁶ Throughout the Islamic empire, the wealthy class including the rulers, would make generous bequests to the government, which would finance all the running costs as well as the services of the hospitals. These bequests were called 'waqfs' and they would come from the revenue earned from property donated by the owner to the government.⁷ An example is the complex of Sultan Qalawun in Cairo, built in 1285 C.E. and still stands today. It consists of a hospital, as well as a school and mausoleum. It was financed with endowments that the Sultan assigned from the waqf fund, in Egypt and other countries and he also contributed an annual stipend of 1,000,000 dirhams.⁸ By the end of the 9th century, many hospitals were founded through the waqf institution.

While Europe was stuck in the dark ages and even still considered witchcraft as the root of many life-taking diseases, medical sciences were flourishing in the Muslim world. Owing to their religious duty to care for the unfortunate, caliphs and kings immensely encouraged physicians and their research. And the great achievement, during the Golden age of the Islamic empire, was the establishment of the 'bimaristan', Persian for 'hospital'. The first hospital (although exclusively for lepers) was built in the 8th century under the Umayyad Caliph Walid I, in Damascus, where proper care, free food and medicine were given. Some hospitals also gave money to the outgoing patient, knowing that he missed out on earning the days he was sick. At the Nuri hospital in Damascus, a young man pretended to be sick so that he could take advantage of the excellent services and take the money; upon examination, the doctor realized his intentions



but allowed him to stay and be served for three days, after which he said to him, "Arab hospitality lasts for three days; please go home now."⁹

Such was the standard of health care delivery for centuries, in many hospitals all over the Muslim lands, including the Ahmad-ibn-Tulun hospital in Cairo built in 872 C.E, the al-Muqtadiri hospital of Baghdad built by Caliph al-Muqtadir in 918 C.E, and the Granada hospital in Spain built in 1366, to name only a few. Free medicine was also provided through mobile hospitals throughout the empire. The vizier Ali bin Isa had ordered that such dispensaries be spread over the land, especially the countryside where people may not have access to medical help. These mobile hospitals would stay in a town for a few days and then move on to another one.

The success of the Islamic health care system lay in its holistic approach to medicine and health care. According to the Holy Qur'an, the purpose of the creation of mankind is to worship God, and so he is forever mindful of his eventual return to Him. His health would come into account as it is directly linked to the life that he leads in this world. Islam means 'submission'; it teaches worship and prayer as the mode of submission. And worship can only be fully concentrated upon with a sound body and mind. Hence, in this spirit, it also inculcates a lifestyle that helps man stay healthy physically, as well as mentally. This

concept of wellness directly shapes what Islam promotes as preventive medicine. Together, the Islamic lifestyle and diet, if observed in the life of a good Muslim, shows the relationship between good health and a clean life. Many health professionals advocate preventive measures similar to what Islam prescribes and believe that by adopting healthy lifestyles, people would require less medical care and health care costs would certainly decrease.

Muslims are advised to eat in small amounts and to control their hunger, so as to avoid gluttony and obesity; such habits are developed by fasting the whole month of Ramadhan. Breast feeding, which is encouraged in Islam has been shown to reduce the risk of breast cancer in women, not to mention the immunologic benefits to the newborn. The onslaught of sexually transmitted diseases, such as HIV and syphilis, is prevented if sexual ethics are practiced. The tradition of circumcision protects both man and woman against certain forms of cancer and infection. Habits such as smoking are disowned in Islam as anything which corrupts the body also corrupts the soul. Similarly, recreational consumption of alcohol is altogether forbidden. Ritual cleanliness protects the body from collecting germs and promotes mental wellness. All of these Islamic instructions and many more, help to prevent diseases that Americans are suffering from today and can avoid, simply by changing their bad habits.

The Islamic system of health care can be easily adopted here in the US as well. Americans would need to realize their moral obligations towards the underprivileged and make some sacrifices to attain universal health care. And a healthy lifestyle would certainly do them good!

Notes:

1. The Hundred Great Muslims, by Jamil Ahmad
2. Poisal, J.A., et al, Health Spending Projections Through 2016: Modest Changes Obscure Part D's Impact. Health Affairs (21 February 2007): W242-253.
3. www.askwebdoctor.com
4. The Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation. The Uninsured: A Primer, Key Facts About Americans without Health Insurance. 2004. 10 November 2004 <http://www.kff.org/uninsured/>
5. Holy Qur'an, Chapter 2 verse 4
6. Islam's Response To Contemporary Issues, by Mirza Tahir Ahmad
7. http://www.nlm.nih.gov/exhibition/islamic_medical/islamic_12.html
8. www.islamonline.net.
9. Medical Care During the Middle Ages, by Dr. Nurdeen Deuraseh

Economic stability in Islam

By Fareeha Haroon

An economy is the realized social system of production, exchange, distribution, and consumption of goods and services of a country or other area. A given economy is the end result of a process that involves its technological evolution, civilization's history and social organization, as well as its geography, resource endowment, and ecology, among other factors. These factors give context, content, and set the conditions and parameters in which an economy functions.

In any group of people, their economy is tied to their political and social system and is reflective of their culture and ideology. Once different countries had their own economic systems but now all the world seems to be tied up in the clutches of capitalism. The recent worldwide credit crunch and collapse of markets has exposed the fickleness of capitalism. It is a system that is based on interest, which is bound to lead to a global crisis. History has shown that capitalism always led to a universal financial crisis which resulted in a global war. It has always played havoc with peace, security, industry, and commerce.

In today's situation, one naturally looks for an economic system which would be free of periods of recession and ever rising inflation. After testing communism, socialism, capitalism, the need for another system, that will

for time indefinite, put the economy on a stable ground, where no financial trouble will occur, is naturally rising.

Fortunately, Islam presents a model for economy that will always remain stable and when followed in its entirety, makes a country prosper and free of all maladies. The Islamic system was fully promulgated in the beginning of the Islamic era and proved to be functional without any sort of economic depression. It is unique in many respects.

The first and foremost foundation of the Islamic economic system is the belief in God; not only that a God exists, but that, He is also the Ultimate Master of the whole universe and all the governments and kingdoms belong to Him. This belief in God leads to belief in goodness and to the importance of morality. It gives way to a concept of trust laid upon mankind to be used within the given guidelines. Since Allah is the Ultimate Master, whatever is in this world, belongs to all of mankind equally and, is not the property of one person or nation. Allah says in the Holy Qur'an, "He it is Who created for you all that is in the earth."

Thus whosoever possesses a resource, should share it with others.

Further, the Islamic concept of economy is based on two principles. First, the division of wealth and opportunity among mankind should be done on the basis of individual effort. It will not only better the condition of the world but he would also collect something for his life hereafter. Second, since everything belongs to Allah and is for all of mankind, if any aspect is overlooked, there should be some law to take care of it. Usually, there are individual based economies such as capitalism and as well as community based or government controlled economies such as communism. Islam believes in taking the middle way. It gives more individual freedom because it believes in the life hereafter where everyone will reap the fruit of his works in this world. If his every action is controlled and dictated, then he cannot be penalized for his actions. Thus Islamic economy is an amalgam of individual enterprise and government control. It gives room to the individual to prosper, but at the same time ensures that no injustice is done to the people. That is why governments are given control over the economy.

The root cause of all problems is the greed for more and more money. Hence, Islam gives measures to discourage this trend. Following are the basic features of an Islamic economy:

■ Islam prohibits all such tendencies and motivations that lead one to the

greed for more and more wealth.

■ All absurd expenses and frivolities are controlled.

■ It prohibits all such ways through which wealth can be stockpiled.

■ The system of zaka'at is followed.

■ Even if one is able to collect money, it is taken care of through inheritance laws. If a person made one million dollars in his life time, after his death, it would be divided among his progeny and every one will get a small portion out of it.

■ The government is responsible for fulfilling the basic needs of the people and, for taking care of the weaker sections of society.

The injunction that wealth belongs to all people is emphasized in the Islamic economy. Thus, Islam prohibits and discourages such tendencies as might give way to a race for accumulating wealth. It clearly highlights the motivation of acquiring more wealth:

"Know that the life of this world is only a sport and a pastime, and an adornment, and a source of boasting among yourselves, and of rivalry in multiplying riches and children. This life is like the rain the vegetation produced whereby rejoices the tillers. Then it dries up and thou see it turn yellow; then it becomes broken pieces of straw. And in the Hereafter there is severe punishment, and also forgiveness from Allah, and His pleasure. And the life of this world is nothing but temporary enjoyment of deceitful things."

All such pursuits are discouraged which may lead one to a path to greed. Islam preaches a simple life and discourages frivolous spending of wealth. There might be some weak people who may succumb to the glitter of gold and adopt the wrong path. Hence, Islam has provided preventive measures, to save a person from falling into the ditch of unending pursuit of wealth.

First of all, Islam rules out usury, which is the main culprit behind all this havoc. Usury affects the economy in many ways. It coaxes a wealthy person to borrow money and convert his money into billions or trillions. Here it should be made clear that Islam does not discourage an individual from making more money, but definitely discourages any effort made at the expense of others. By the use of interest, only a few people gather wealth and the masses are left lurching for basic needs. The rich turn their wealth into monopolies and trusts and become a hindrance in the path of national progress of the country. Secondly, masses

are encouraged to deposit money in the banks with a promise for a return. They are led to the notion that money increases if it is left to sit idle. By the time they earn the promised return, the money has lost its value. Moreover, they are encouraged to borrow and are given the impression that they are borrowing from banks, when actually, they are borrowing from their future as they are spending what they have not earned yet. In addition, the loan multiplies and they end up paying much more than they had borrowed earlier. Since everyone has money, so their buying power has increased, they spend frivolously which makes banks earn more and it creates a notion that the economy is flourishing and there seems to be a boom. Then a saturation point comes, when everyone has to pay back and the banks have little or no money left to lend. Everything comes to a stand still and the boom converts into a bang! The developed countries play the same game in foreign markets and lead them to the same disaster. This interest based system, thus further impoverishes the weaker nations. The IMF and World Bank lend money to poor nations and charge high interests, which never let them become self-sufficient. If it had been a fair trade as Islam preaches, both parties would have shared their capabilities and had participated greatly. This is what was practiced in the early centuries of Islam which resulted in a strong economy. Thus the Islamic government became a role model for the rest of world where no one would sleep on an empty stomach and people were happy and prosperous.

Furthermore interest controls inflation also and any fluctuation in its rate affects prices greatly.

Besides usury, cartel systems and stocking are forbidden. Islam is in favor of giving autonomy to markets, but govern-

ments are asked to keep a watchful eye on the market so that no one should drop or prop prices that adversely affect the nation. Otherwise, the government cannot interfere with the market and fix prices. It might hurt the chain of supply and demand. The priority is to protect the masses and to make sure that no one has forcefully taken control of the market to make a profit, at the expense of others.

A measure taken by Islam to prevent the accumulation of wealth, is zaka'at. This



is a tax which a person pays when he has money or valuables, for more than one year. It is not income tax, but capital tax. Islam believes that whatever wealth a rich man has, is a direct or indirect result of hard work of the poor and they have a share in it too. Thus any capital sitting idle has to be taxed at the end of the year. Otherwise it will return to the people through zaka'at. There are also, certain sources of wealth that exist all the time e.g. oil, mines etc. For them, khumus is promulgated. So whatever is taken out of the mines, one fifth goes to the government and if the owners of those resources accumulate wealth for more than one year, they will pay zaka'at too. Zaka'at is the alternative to interest, to move the wheel of economy. One will have to use money within a year to avoid the tax and

thus will benefit the whole society.

The Islamic laws of inheritance provide the same advantage to the deceased's family. No one can give all his wealth to one of his inheritors. He has to abide by the Islamic laws that divide the inheritance among each member of a family. Thus not only is the wealth divided, but it is not collected by one person. In the west, anyone can be excluded or included in the inheritance.

With such a system, Islam takes care of the problem right at the root. It says that wealth belongs to Allah and His prophet.

"Whatever Allah has given to His Messenger as spoils from the people of the town is for Allah and for the Messenger and for the near of the kin and the orphans and the needy and the wayfarer, that it may not circulate only among those of you who are rich."

This verse sheds light on the basics of an Islamic economy. Whatever wealth there is, is for the people and under the control of the government. It is done in order to make sure that the wealth and resources are not concentrated in a small group. Islam further declares that it is the responsibility of the government to take care of the basic needs of the people. It is a command that was first revealed to Prophet Adam^{as}. It again took into effect when Islam surged and reached its peak during the era of

Hadhrat Omar^{ra}. He developed a complete system in which lists of the people were maintained and the government was responsible for their basic needs.

Therefore, if the economy were to be based on Islamic principles, there is no doubt that the economy would stabilize. The economic cycle would not fall into a recession and we would have a peaceful and prosperous society.

Bibliography

Hadhrat Mirza Bashiruddin Mahmood Ahmadra Islam Ka Iqtasadi Nizam.

Hadhrat Mirza Tahir Ahmadrat Universal Moral Values, Politics and World Peace.

Ask Islam. (n.d.). Retrieved from www.askislam.org



Religion in Education: What's all the fuss about?

By Allison Knight-Khan

“I wanted to create a little more interest by taking a prayer rug to show the little children how we pray. He told me, very firmly, not to come back until Javaria was in grade five “and don’t bring the prayer rug” he said nervously, “because you’re not allowed to demonstrate how to pray.” I felt confused and offended. My religion is very important to me.”

In a 1989 article entitled *Schools Must Teach Religion*, Edward Lear the television producer stated, “It is unacceptable for the schools to adopt a narrow sectarianism, so also it is unacceptable for them to embrace an absolute secularism....education demands ethical literacy—and that requires a full discussion of the moral and spiritual values.”

Last week, my daughter Javaria, who attends grade three in Powder Springs, Georgia, complained that one of the boys in her classroom was making fun of her. As a teacher, I assumed it was a normal part of education to ignore boys who make fun of her, until I asked her what he said.

“Pig, pig, pig!” he chanted.

I wondered how he could call her a pig when we abstain from eating all pigs? There is no logic, I concluded. Maybe he had hurt feelings? I really couldn’t tell from my sink at home. But, I knew that it was the second year of this behavior. The negative comments had started the year before when the supply teacher let each student explain some aspect of his or her religion. When Javaria’s turn came, he and a few other children laughed at her openly.

Javaria reported the new incident to her teacher, who told her that she intended to move the boy, but she was busy.

A week went by. Finally, the boy was moved and the other two adherents that he’d won over disappeared with him. The chorus of negativity had been squashed, yet I still felt dissatisfied.

On parent-teacher night, I spoke to the new principal of the school for the first time. I explained the problem and he

promised that he would speak to the boy. "It's all about respect," he said, as he ushered us out of his office.

I waited another week to find out if the principal had interviewed the boy.

"Why did you complain about me?" the boy finally complained to Javaria.

Javaria, who is a *Waqf-e-nau* (i.e. children dedicated to serve the faith), didn't answer him back because she didn't want to create more trouble, but she reported it to me. I felt some relief.

The problem was solved. Or was it? Since kindergarten, my oldest child, Javaria has felt isolated in the school system because she is the only Muslim in her class. Our neighbors in Atlanta are predominantly Baptist Christians, whether they are Caucasian or African American.

Feeling sympathy for her, because she was the only one in school at the time, I asked the previous principal if I could speak about Islam in the classroom to introduce her differences—or what made her special—I thought. Since I think like a teacher, I explained that I wanted to create a little more interest by taking a prayer rug to show the little children how we pray. He told me, very firmly, not to come back until Javaria was in grade five "and don't bring the prayer rug" he said nervously, "because you're not allowed to demonstrate how to pray."

I felt confused and offended. My religion is very important to me. I thought I had explained our faith very nicely, so why was I still getting rejected?

He spoke the truth. The matter was out of his hands.

To add to the confusion, Javaria's grade one teacher sent me a note telling me that I couldn't visit the class because it wasn't constitutional. When she said constitutional, I felt like someone was aiming an old red cannon at me! The previous principal explained that Javaria's grade one teacher was mistaken. He admitted that the definition of the religious limits comes from the First Amendment, but because of its limitations, I couldn't teach anyone how to pray—not even in grade five.

So I am relieved to find out that I am not the only one who has been confused by the American education system regarding religion. It's nice to know I'm not

alone. In fact, I think there are enough of us to start a club!

In January of 2002, Excelsior School in the Byron Union School District near Oakland, California weathered criticism for its three week course on Islam. The seventh graders received Muslim names, read verses from the Holy Qur'an, learned to write Islamic proverbs in Arabic and organized a pretend Hajj. (Heritage 3)

In reaction, the 3Rs committee, who advised the teachers on how to teach religion, suggested that it "is more respectful and educationally sound to view a video." (Heritage 3)

As a professional teacher, I feel sure that if the subject had not been Islam, any teacher who had created such an interesting and memorable study unit in any school system, should have and would have been applauded by the staff as brilliant. Clearly, the California 3Rs committee, which coincidentally represent: Rights, Responsibilities and Respect, felt very uncomfortable with this interactive unit of study on Islam. More to the point, they feared repercussions. They feared repercussions, not from the students, but the 'participation in the pseudo-religious events might "violate their (or their parents') conscience."' (Heritage 3) And sue...? Fortunately for that wonderful, liberal-minded teacher, no one did.

There is a lot of frustration in store for educators who love their religion too. Take for example, the case of Ms. Wigg in South Dakota. She tried to teach an after school Evangelical group that only meets for one hour a week called The Good News Club. The school refused to let her lead it, because she teaches at the school. She argues that she is "off the clock," but the school board argues that she looks too much like a proselytizing member of the school board. The one hour class is designed to teach moral development. To Ms. Wigg, it must seem ironic that anyone else in her community can teach her students, but not her, a trained teacher. Ms. Webb tried holding The Good News Club at another school, but she was stopped. Finally, the board informed her that she can develop her students' morals once a week, but not in any of the schools in the area. Ms. Wiggs went so far as to sue her own school board, but the outcome did not look very hopeful.

What are the boards of education afraid of? What is all the confusion about?

Krista Kafer, an Education Policy Analyst, says that the defining statement in the First Amendment clause is that "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof." (Heritage 3) It is a rather delicate balance. Teachers cannot stop others from praying, but they are prohibited from using their positions to influence students toward any particular religion. Consequently, teachers can monitor clubs, but they can't participate in them. On the other hand, religious students who would like to observe their daily prayers, cannot be stopped.

Therefore, if there are even two Ahmadi Muslims at one school, they are legally allowed to do their prayers at the proper time. The school government cannot stop them. The school administrators, however, by the same reversible yardstick, will not advise them that this is their right.

While some teachers might be liberal enough to hold Hajj demonstrations in their schools, other administration and staff don't encourage Muslims to observe their daily prayers due to the inconvenience or the disruption it might cause to the schedule. A nice explanation and gentle insistence may provide a better example of Islam than any parent could hope to give a whole classroom—children praying in front of their classmates!

Allah records in a clear book where we pray. What better record could we leave behind than all our zuhr prayers to protect the school, insh-Allah?

Works Cited

Commentary: Lear: Schools Must Teach About Religion. 13 December 1989.

<http://edweek.org/login.html?source=http%3A%2F%2Fwww...>

Goldblatt, Jeff. Teacher Fights for Right to Teach Religion After School. 9 June

2003. <<http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,88919,00.html>

Kafer, Krista. How to Teach Religion in Public Schools.

<<http://www.heritage.org/Press/Commentary/ed083102.cfm>

The foundation and history of taxation in Islam

By Atif Mir

The tax debate in the modern state, particularly during election years, tends to become hostage to ideology. Any pronouncements about tax hikes or cuts are often painted as a battle between “socialist” and “right-wing” forces. Behind the loaded political rhetoric, the debate is simply between the competing values of economic growth and economic equity. The liberals believe that the government must raise taxes and redistribute income. The conservatives argue that tax cuts will create more jobs and thereby minimize the need for income redistribution. What is Islam’s perspective on this debate? This article will briefly explore the history of Islamic taxes and donation schemes and then deduce and discuss principles of an Islamic taxation system.

The foundation of an Islamic taxation system, is the belief that everything in the universe belongs to Allah. The Holy Qur'an says: “To Allah belongs the kingdom of heavens and the earth; and Allah has power over all things,” (3:190). Furthermore, the Islamic state must treat tax funds as a trust and spend accordingly. The Holy Qur'an offers guidance in this regard: “Whatever Allah has given to his Messenger as spoils from the people of the towns, it is for Allah and the Messenger and for the near of kin and the orphans and the needy and the wayfarer, in order that it may not circulate only among those of you who are rich...” (59:8). Even though “to Allah belongs the Kingdom of heaven and the earth”, Islam does recognize the right of private property and individual ownership. But Allah wants “that individual owner should treat his property as a sort of trust and subjects the institution of private property to limits and correctiveness which tend to reduce the power and influence of the wealthier sections of the community.

The ultimate purpose of an Islamic taxation system is, therefore, to “reduce the power and influence of...wealthier sections of the community” and to improve the well being of

every individual living under its imposition. It is worth noting, that Islam advocates the distribution of wealth but, it does not prevent the creation of wealth through fair means as long as it is spread around.

Islamic Taxes & Donation Schemes

Here, it is important to clarify that in an Islamic state, the authority to collect funds would reside both with the state and the *nizam-e-jama'at*. An Islamic state will tax those individuals and businesses that reside in its jurisdiction. The *nizam-e-jama'at*, however, will collect the funds from the whole Muslim *ummah*, under the system of *wasiyyat*, *zaka'at* and *chanda*. The funds will be used by the caliph for the propagation of Islam and the eradication of poverty across the globe. In the early Islamic state, the caliph was also the head of state, hence, donations and taxes were both collected by the state.

Zaka'at

The first and the only compulsory tax in Islam is *zaka'at*. The Holy Prophet said: “*Zaka'at* is a levy imposed upon the well-to-do which is returned to the poorer sections of the people.” The proceeds of *zaka'at* are earmarked for the overall betterment of humanity.

Jizya

In some periods of history, Muslims collected *jizya* from non-Muslims. *Jizya* was not an additional tax levied on non-Muslims; it was a substitute of *zaka'at*. This made sense as non-Muslims would have been, most likely, reluctant to pay an Islamic tax.

Ushoor & Khiraj

Besides *jizya*, *ushoor* and *khiraj* were other major taxes collected by Islamic jurisdictions in the early history of Islam. *Khiraj* was a land tax while *ushoor* was a duty on import and

The ultimate purpose of an Islamic taxation system is, therefore, to “reduce the power and influence of...wealthier sections of the community” and to improve the well being of every individual living under its imposition.

export. When Islamic governments conquered new territories, they inherited these taxes from previous governments and continued to levy these taxes but with lower rates to lighten the tax burdens of peasants and traders.

Al-Wasiyyat

In modern times, Hadhrat Mirza Bashir-ud-Din Mahmud Ahmad^{ra}, Khalifa-tul-Masih II, acknowledges that industrialization, commercial competition, and international struggle over resources, have made the system of *zaka'at* and voluntary contributions inadequate. However, he emphasizes that: “...this does not detract from the excellence of the Islamic teaching on the subject. At that time the object of this teaching could be fulfilled by means of *zaka'at* and voluntary contributions...”

In this regard, Hadhrat Mirza Bashir-ud-Din^{ra} says: “The Promised Messiah^{as} has interpreted the Islamic teachings according to the needs of the present age. If the Islamic state has to provide food, clothing, shelter, medical relief, and means of education to everybody, it must have at its disposal very much larger resources than would have sufficed in the early days of Islam.” That is why he concludes, that the Promised Messiah, Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^{as} introduced the system of *Al-Wasiyyat*. Muslims who join this system are required to volunteer from 1/10th to 1/3rd of their properties and belongings. The funds collected through this system, have been earmarked for the strengthening and

propagation of Islam and welfare of those who do not possess adequate means of sustenance.

Modern Islamic State & Principles of Taxation System

As discussed above, in the modern set up, funds collected through zaka'at, wasiyyat and other donation schemes, would land in the coffers of Bait-ul-Ma'al (treasury house controlled by the nizam-e-jama'at). An Islamic state would have to levy its own taxes to meet its needs and manage its responsibilities. What should the tax designed by an Islamic state be like? In this regard, zaka'at, provides some guidance. Funds collected under zaka'at should be spent to improve economic equities but at the same time the system of zaka'at encourages entrepreneurs to invest their capital instead of letting it sit idle. Hence it may be argued that the primary principles of Islamic taxation should be, economic equity and the circulation of wealth.

Economic Equity is one of the most desired ideals in Islam. To realize this ideal, the tax system can play a key role. To begin with, the tax legislation and audit system of the state should discover and plug loopholes to prevent evasion and avoidance of taxes. The strong audit system helps to ensure that the burden of taxation is shared fairly and as intended by the tax system. Should an Islamic state impose a progressive tax rate structure to promote economic equity? Under this structure, a tax rate increases if the amount of income to which it applies, increases. Again, guidance should be sought from the system of zaka'at and wasiyyat. About zaka'at, Hadhrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad^{ra} says: "Although much has been said about the rate or percentage of this tax (zaka'at), we find no reference to any fixed percentage in the Holy Qur'an...I believe that the question of percentage remains flexible and should be determined according to the state of the economy in a particular country." Hence, the rate of zaka'at, arguably, is not fixed and flat. It can be levied according to the needs of the economy. As for wasiyyat, Muslims who join this system are required to volunteer a certain percentage of their properties and belongings, as mentioned above, making the system of wasiyyat progressive by choice.

As discussed, the proper tax design goes a long way in realizing the goal of economic equity. The responsible spending of tax funds is no less important. The Holy Prophet^{saw} has said: "Each of you is like a shepherd to whom

One of the recent examples of questionable spending of tax dollars in the USA, was the \$700 billion bail out package for major financial institutions. This package, which is intended to inject capital into the strained financial system, used the taxpayer's money to subsidize a financial disaster that resulted from the greed of Wall Street and the lack of proper government regulations. When all is said and done, the bail out package transferred \$700 billion from the pockets of taxpayers to big financial institutions.

the sheep do not belong. He is entrusted with the responsibility of tending the sheep. You will be held answerable." In the light of this hadith, the tax funds are like a sheep that the state must spend responsibly. As discussed, the state's first responsibility is towards the poor and a genuine effort should be made not to waste tax funds. One of the recent examples of questionable spending of tax dollars in the USA, was the \$700 billion bail out package for major financial institutions. This package, which is intended to inject capital into the strained financial system, used the taxpayer's money to subsidize a financial disaster that resulted from the greed of Wall Street and the lack of proper government regulations. When all is said and done, the bail out package transferred \$700 billion from the pockets of taxpayers to big financial institutions. The government should have prevented this crisis by putting in place proper regulations. With this bail out package, the deficit of the US government has worsened. Most likely, taxes will be raised,

sooner or later, to deal with the ballooning deficit and taxpayers will pay twice for the greed of Wall Street and the negligence of the government.

Islam advocates economic equity but it does not impose rules that might hamper individual entrepreneurship in the economic arena. Economic prosperity is not discouraged as long as the created wealth is shared. Zaka'at proves that if a tax is properly designed, the whole economy benefits from the circulation of money which in turn promotes economic growth. However, if an investor has an option to earn interest on his/her idle capital, he/she might be more comfortable to earn 5% risk-free money on deposits sitting idle in the bank rather than invest in a venture. With this decision, the investor short-circuits the circulation-of-money process and adversely impacts the economic equity. Therefore, when designing the tax, the effects of tax to economic growth should be considered. Properly designed, taxes should not hurt the prosperity of a society.

An objection that is often raised against welfare states, is that its higher taxes hurt business spending. Since an Islamic state, by definition, is a welfare state, this objection needs to be responded to. In this regard, Sweden can be cited as an example. Paul Krugman, a 2008 Nobel laureate, said, "Since 1993 the economy (of Sweden) has grown vigorously...most predictions are for growth....Unemployment has fallen steadily, with many predicting that it will drop below 5 per cent next year....last year Sweden collected an awesome 63 percent of GDP in taxes." In simple words, despite high taxes, the economy of Sweden has grown and unemployment rates have fallen.

In the modern times, unfortunately, the tax debate has become ideological. The Islamic taxation system does not present an ideological tax system, rather flexible and practical principles to design a tax system to suit the economic circumstances of the time. Generally, the developed countries have introduced Islam-like tax systems in the later half of 20th century that tries to balance the competing objectives of equity and economic growth. However, what still makes the Islamic taxation system special, is that two principles of Islamic taxation, equity and economic progress, are guided by the principle of righteousness which rejects greed and encourages circulation and distribution of wealth, to seek the pleasure of Allah. This principle of righteousness, ultimately, continues to be the true hall mark of the Islamic taxation system.



leadership

Fundamentals of Leadership

By Aisha Husain Ahmad

The world has always been a place of organized chaos. Through the ages, the degrees of chaos have fluctuated wildly, with periods of relative calm sandwiched between years of global unrest and uncertainty. Our world today is no exception. Due to advancements in technology, ours is a smaller world, more tightly connected. With a few keystrokes, we have the ability to sit at home and communicate with people from all over the globe. Though the world has become smaller, it seems like our trove of problems continues to grow larger. It is in these times that society hunts for true leaders to guide them through the turbulent times into peace and prosperity. But has society truly chosen the right leaders for the times? Some of these so-called leaders are synonymous with dictators and tyrants. However, true leadership is for the advancement of society and for the betterment of the common people. It is not about control and rigidity and cruelty.

A true leader should possess certain attributes that enable him or her to bring about a positive effect to the lives of others. Among these are truthfulness, humility, discipline, receptiveness, steadfastness, strength of character and kindness. In Islam, and in fact, for the world, there can be no more perfect an example of this than the Holy Prophet^{saw}. He was a perfect leader in both peacetime and wartime, possessing these and many more such qualities of true leadership. It is to him that we should look when choosing a leader, for he is the perfect guide. Islam is the only religion that allows for equal rights for women, in society as well as in positions of power. But leadership is not about power. It carries with it great responsibility and must not be taken lightly.

In his influential book, *Leadership for the 21st Century*, Joseph Rost offers a foundational definition. According to Rost, leadership is “an influence relationship among leaders and followers who intend real changes that reflect their mutual purposes.”¹ In essence, leaders and their followers are in a symbiotic relationship, where both parties are striving toward the same purpose.

There are many different types and categories of leaders. Among them, there are two types that are mentioned by another authority in leadership studies, James MacGregor Burns. In his book *Leadership*, Burns discusses transactional leadership versus transformational leadership.² Transactional leadership is where the leader is in charge of a group of followers who work toward a pre-determined goal in exchange for something else. In this type of setup, the leader has the power to reward or punish as he sees fit. It is often applied in task management and attaining short-term goals. Transformational, on the other hand, is true leadership. A transformational leader has an infectious enthusiasm that has the power to influence, inspire, motivate, and transform. The agenda is for the good of the common people, and in order to achieve that, the leader must pay attention to his followers’ needs.

In Islam, it is the transformational type of leadership that is significant. In a hadith narrated by Abu Maryam al-Azdi, the Holy Prophetsaw said, “If Allah puts anyone in the position of authority over the Muslims’ affairs and he secludes himself (from them), not

fulfilling their needs, wants, and poverty, Allah will keep Himself away from him, not fulfilling his need, want, and poverty” (Sunan Abu Dawud). Thus, a true leader should not focus on his own personal needs; he needs to keep in mind the needs of his followers. In his book *Revelation, Rationality, Knowledge and Truth*, Hadhrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad^{ra} writes, “Whenever a social, racial, economic or political order evolves, it always evolves around an unwritten understanding of give and take between the society and the individuals which collectively make the society. No individual will ever readily surrender his freedom but only on the understanding that in the bargain he gains more than what he has lost.”³ Being a true leader involves making sacrifices in the face of great adversity. All of Allah’s prophets, including the Holy Prophet^{saw}, were beloved by Allah, yet they faced innumerable trials and tribulations. But because they were blessed by Allah and were true leaders with a clear vision to better the lives of their followers, they made impacts that changed the course of history. Though they all faced mortal danger, they believed in the truth of their message, as did their followers.

A leader, in whatever setting, must have certain attributes to make his leadership effective. As stated before, the Holy Prophet^{saw} is a most virtuous example to all Muslims regarding leadership. In Chapter 68, verse 5 of the Holy Qur’an, it is stated, “And thou dost, surely, possess sublime moral excellences.” To see what a true leader is like, one need look no further than the Holy Prophetsaw. His enemies absurdly accused him of being a madman, but Allah dictated that the true madmen would be soon revealed. Actions of madmen always come to the destruction of themselves, yet the Holy Prophetsaw was victorious in every way. Steadfastness is one such important attribute. Without it, the early disintegration of the common goal is imminent. In Chapter 3, verse 140, the Holy Qur’an states, “Slacken not, nor grieve; and you shall certainly have the upper hand, if you are true believers.” This verse was geared specifically toward the nations of the time, to not weaken nor despair, but to stay strong for the uncertain future.

Humility and kindness are extremely important as well. More and more it seems that human nature has an increased propensity for evil toward his fellow man. Hadhrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad^{ra} states, “It is humans alone

who can willfully ignore their responsibilities and usurp the rights of other members of society knowing it to be wrong. So the individual freedom in relation to the collective responsibility man owes to any institution is undermined and sabotaged by his propensity to break laws, commit frauds and act wrongfully, yet hoping to run away with whatever he can.”³ A true leader shies away from defrauding his followers and other leaders, be it leaders of an organization or a nation. Hadhrat Ibn Umar^{ra} narrates a hadith, “When the leaders of a people you visit, show them due respect” (Ibn Majah). In the same way, a leader should show kindness to his enemies as well as his followers. In Chapter 3, verse 160, the Holy Qur’an states:

“And it is by the great mercy of Allah that thou art kind towards them, and

if thou hadst been rough and hard-hearted, they would surely have dispersed from around thee. So pardon them and ask forgiveness of them, and

consult with them in matters of administration; and when thou art resolved, then put thy trust in Allah. Surely Allah loves those who put their trust in Him.”

This verse was revealed after the Battle of Uhud. It is a matter of record that the Holy Prophetsaw forgave his enemies and his followers who had deserted him on the battlefield. He took no action against them and even consulted them on state matters.

Clearly Islam contains a precise set of requirements and guidelines that can be applied to the role of leadership. But is leadership limited to only men? Many people would answer in the affirmative, saying that perhaps women are too weak to be in positions of leadership. This view does not necessarily have to do exclusively with how the world views Islam. There are many people who believe that women in general are not fit to be leaders. However, Islam views women as equals to men. It states in the Holy Qur’an in chapter 2, verse 229, “And they (the women) have rights similar to those (of men) over them in equity; but men have a degree of advantage above them. And Allah is Mighty and Wise.” The degree of advantage mentioned in the preceding verse is the male responsibility to take care of women and protect them. Many people take this to mean that women are still subordinate to men. However, Islam stands out as the only religion that grants abundant legal rights to women. For example, in the political realm,

there are several Muslim countries that have or have had women in the highest positions of power. Indonesia, the world’s most populous Muslim-majority country, had a female president, Megawati Sukarnoputri. Pakistan, another Muslim country elected Benazir Bhutto. Of course, women leaders are still a long ways from being in the forefront of the global political platform, but there are many rungs to the ladder of leadership. Women can be leaders in industry, science, education, and in the home. Unfortunately, in the West we sometimes overlook one of the most demanding positions of leadership: Motherhood.

Leadership, whether it be of a country or of an institution, is very important to regulate the natural state of chaos that exists in the world. Leadership is not about the leader; it is about the people being led. The focus should always be on them and their needs. In *Islam’s Response to Contemporary Issues*, Hadhrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad^{ra} states, “In a true Islamic government, it is the responsibility of the government to be watchful so that people do not have to resort to strikes, industrial strife, demonstration, sabotage, or cause for complaint, to get their rights.”⁴ He even explains why people allow themselves to be governed, saying, “Primarily, it is individual security which he bargains for at the cost of some personal freedom. On the one hand he surrenders some of his rights to whatever institution he becomes a member of and, on the other, he gains some guaranteed protection and such assistance as would make his individual existence easier and more comfortable.”³ Basically, to protect oneself, a person submits to authority. But this authority should be to maintain the civility of society and to protect the common people and to improve their quality of life. In today’s world, true leadership seems to be a rare gem. May Allah guide us all on the right path to unearth it and shine its light upon a world in need.

End Notes

1. Joseph Rost, *Leadership for the 21st Century*, (Westport, CT: Praeger Press, 1993)
2. James MacGregor Burns, *Leadership*, (New York: Harper & Row, 1978)
3. Hadhrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad, *Revelation, Rationality, Knowledge, and Truth*, (Tilford, UK: Islam International Publications Limited, 1998)
4. Hadhrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad, *Islam’s Response to Contemporary Issues*, (Tilford, UK: Islam International Publications Limited, 1992)

What about democracy in Islam?

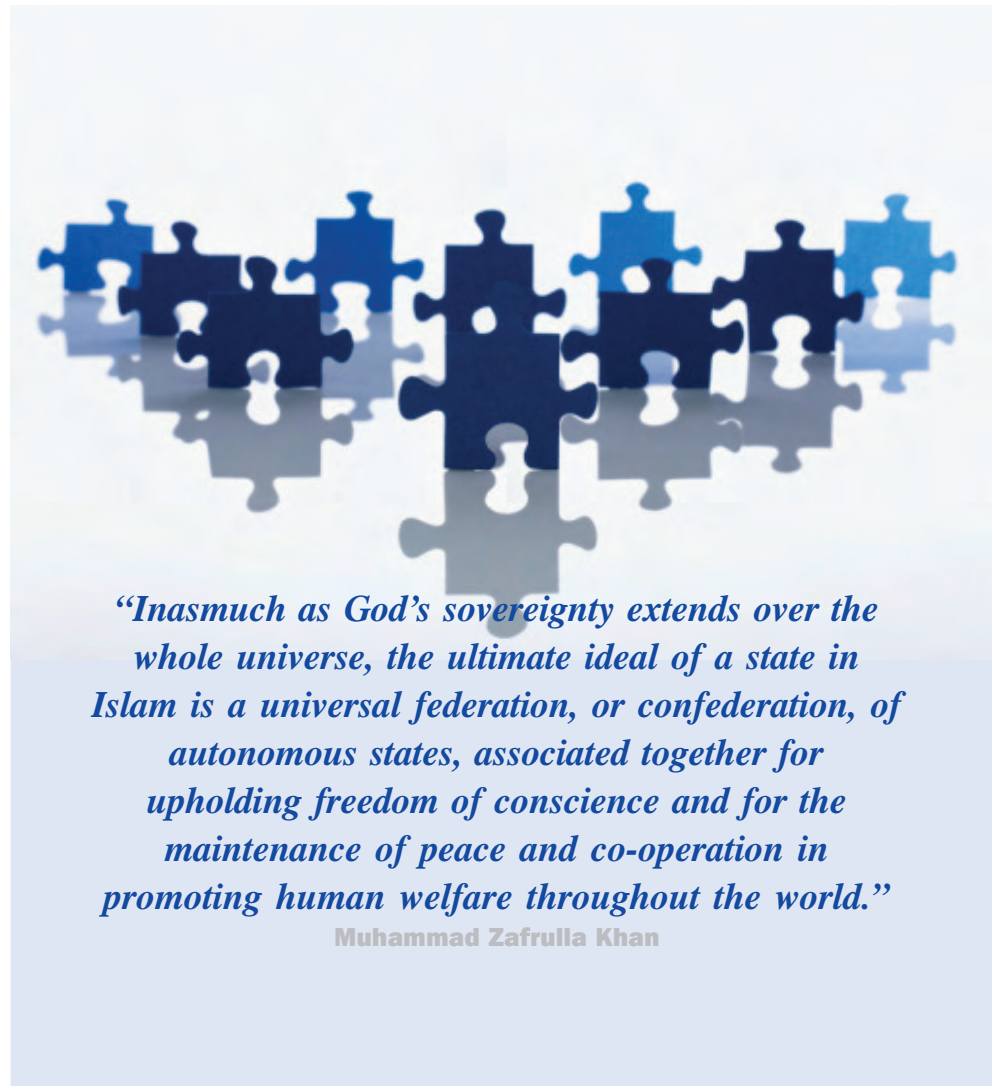
Democracy is a political system – a form of government in which people vote for representatives to govern the state on their behalf. Democracy is not specifically attached to any one faith tradition; it is a political phenomenon, with a history of its own, and is still in progress. It is a complex process with many challenges in various parts of the world. Like other world religions, such as Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, Shinto and Judaism, Islam essentially deals with matters of faith, worship, morality and spirituality in individual and collective lives of people.

By Mubasher Ahmad

People belonging to various world religions have gone through and lived by many forms of governments – such as kingship, feudalism, dictatorship and theocracy. Like all other religions, Islam has continued to be preached and practiced under various forms of governments. There have been Muslim caliphs, kings, sultans, dictators, presidents, tribal chiefs, and Ameer.

The crucial question for us here is to consider whether Islamic religious beliefs and values are compatible with the basic principles of any democratic form of government or not. And if the answer is in the affirmative, which it certainly is, then the next question would be: How far the principles of the religion of Islam can practically influence the present Muslim populations to adopt democracy as a form of government?

1. The most fundamental teaching of Islam is Tawheed, that is, to have faith in the Unity of God called Allah. The Muslims believe in Him to be the Creator and Sustainer of the universe, including all the people. The Qur'an starts with the declaration that Allah Alone is the Creator and Sustainer of the worlds, Lord of all mankind. The last chapter of the Qur'an is entitled – Al-Nas – 'The People.' It declares unambiguously that Allah Alone is the Creator-Sustainer of the people, the Sovereign of the people, and the Lord of the people. Thus the repeated reference to the people, to entire mankind, certainly establishes the fact that the people have to remain central concern in any Islamic state!



2. The significance of the people is also re-emphasized by the Qur'an when it declares that there is not a single nation that God did not send His guidance through His messengers, the prophets of God (35:24), (2:214). The Qur'an declares that Muhammad (may peace and blessings of Allah be on him), the Prophet of Islam, was sent as a Messenger of God

to all mankind with a universal message (4:80), (21:108). “Inasmuch as God’s sovereignty extends over the whole universe, the ultimate ideal of a state in Islam is a universal federation, or confederation, of autonomous states, associated together for upholding freedom of conscience and for the maintenance of peace and co-operation in promoting human

welfare throughout the world.” [Islam: Its Meaning for Modern Man, by Muhammad Zafrulla Khan, p. 158.]

3. The Qur’an instructs us to establish unity among mankind by declaring that all the people in the world are one extended family – namely, the children of Adam and Eve. Therefore, disorder and lawlessness, chaotic and anarchic conditions are strongly condemned in Islam. Establishment of peace and security are the goals of Islam. While aiming at the unity, peace, love and security among the people, Islam does not deny the diversity among the individuals, families, ethnic groups, races and tribes. God in the Qur’an declares: “O mankind, We have created you from a male and a female; and we have made you races and tribes, that you may know one another. Verily the most honorable among you, in the sight of Allah, is he who is the most righteous among you” (49:13). This verse of the Qur’an eliminates the false sense of superiority or inferiority based on race, color or ethnicity of any individual or group. All humans are declared equal in the sight of God.

4. Political office is a trust given to a leader by the people, and according to the teachings of Islam it needs to be given only to those who are capable of discharging this duty with the utmost integrity. Its use or misuse affects the general well being of the people and the state. In turn the people have a duty to exercise wisely their right to entrust someone with the authority. The Qur’an says: “Verily Allah commands you to give over the trusts to those who are best fitted to discharge it” (4:59). Here, it is manifestly made clear that the authority or power to rule is a “trust” of the people, and it belongs to the people, and it is not the birth-right of any individual or any family. The rulers have to be elected instead of inheriting the political power by right of birth. In electing the government officials as trustees of political power; Muslims are instructed to elect the one best fitted for the office.

5. Those entrusted with political power are required to discharge their du-

ties most diligently and with full integrity and justice. The Qur’an states: “And if one of you entrusts another with something, then let him who is entrusted surrender and return his trust, and let him fear Allah, his Lord” (2:284). For the Muslim, the Qur’an gives clear instructions in the following words: “O ye who believe! Prove not false to Allah and the messenger, nor betray your trusts knowingly” (8:28). As a matter of fact, to be watchful of the trusts and to keep the promises made to others are fundamental requirements to be a Muslim (70:33). The Prophet of Islam said: “Every one of you is a shepherd, and is responsible and accountable for that which is committed to his care, and the ruler is responsible for and answerable to his people...” It is, therefore, the responsibility of an Islamic state to safeguard its people against disorder and oppression, to look after their national security, and to make provisions for all their material and intellectual needs.

6. To uphold absolute justice is an essential requirement for an Islamic administration. The Qur’an commands: “O ye who believe! Be strict in observing justice, and be witness for Allah, even though it is against you or against your parents or kindred, whether he is rich or poor” (4:136). “When you judge between people (or use your authority), you must do so equitably and with justice” (4:59). The Qur’an commands to remain just even to the enemies: “O ye who believe! Be steadfast in the cause of Allah, and bear witness in justice (and equity); and let not a people’s enmity incite you to act unjustly. Be always just, that is nearer to righteousness” (5:9).

Once the Muslim Caliph, Umar the Great was summoned to court to answer a civil charge leveled against him. When he appeared in the court, the judge stood up as a mark of respect for the caliph. Umar observed that he had come into the court not in his capacity as the caliph, but as a private citizen, and that it was utterly wrong and inconsistent with the judge’s position to extend any courtesy to the caliph which was not extended to all other citizens when appearing in court. He held that the judge, by his action, had failed in his duty to

remain impartial towards the parties in dispute, and he was not fit to exercise justice.

7. Another essential democratic principle is to run a government by mutual consultation. The Qur’an is explicitly clear on this point. The Prophet of Islam was commanded by God to run the affairs dealing with administration through a consultative process – known as “Shura” in Arabic (3:160), and the Muslims are required to decide important matters by mutual consultation among competent members of the community (42:39). Therefore, the government must decide questions of policy and all major administrative issues after full discussion among the chosen representatives of the people.

8. In addition to mutual consultation, Islam endorses independent judgment (Ijtihad), and also encourages building consensus (Ijma) among the people. The Qur’an repeatedly invites and encourages the use of human intellectual faculties, promoting scientific inquiry and advancing social sciences. This includes open discussion on political thought and how to run a government.

9. Lastly, Islam upholds the principle that freedom of conscience and religious belief is a basic human right, and no force should be applied in religious matters, and no one should be coerced to change one’s faith against his or her own conscience. The Qur’an clearly declares, “There is no compulsion in religion” (2:257). Faith is a personal choice, therefore, instead of coercion or oppression, mutual discussions, interfaith dialogues, wisdom and kind persuasion are the methods clearly defined by the Qur’an (16:126).

To conclude, Islam as a religion allows enough ground for the Muslims to select democracy as a form of government, and the fundamentals of democratic governance are part of the Islamic value system. Islam and democracy are not mutually exclusive. However, democracy in Islamic countries needs not be an exact copy of the Western form of democracies.



The following responses were written as a blog on US News earlier this year, by Shazia Sohail.

Q *I believe that monotheistic faiths and polytheistic faiths are just winds blowing in different directions. Don't you think mankind has outgrown the 'thou shalt not' approach?*

A I don't think polytheism is as simple as the wind blowing in different directions. My main issue with believing in multiple gods is that it brings about a split in humanity. Belief in One God means He created everyone, so we are all children of the same God. It is the basis of equality and complete lack of racism. With multiple gods you get into the discussion of 'who is your god and who is my god' which inevitably leads to 'my god is better than your god', leading to 'I am better than you.' This is what happened in Hinduism. Spiritual practices aside, their social practices viz. a viz. lower castes and other religions are horrific. This was the main reason behind the split of the Indian sub-continent.

I agree that at an individual level spiritual practices can lead to the same outcome - some kind of harmony with nature. But at a social and collective level we need a set of teachings that can guarantee order and harmony in society. We need a system of justice based on wisdom; we need a matrix of rights and obligations of various players in society; and we need to somehow support and protect the weak, and the disenfranchised.

I also agree with your contention that mankind has outgrown the 'thou shall not' approach. To put it simply, we started from the level of 'an eye for an eye,' progressed to 'turn the other cheek' and evolved to 'use your judgment and select the course of action calculated to

bring about reformation, but if you are not sure what to do then it is better to err on the side of forgiveness.'

Q But I believe that the realm of governance should be secular.

A Again, I agree with you that the realm of governance has to be secular. The fact is that any system that is based on justice is in accord with Islam. The problem comes in when distance from God leads to corruption of politicians, which leads to breakdown of the best of systems. At that point, religion can inform personal conduct. That should be the extent of religion in politics. Let me give you an example that illustrates my point.

Islam only informs humans on where one can go wrong in matters of governance and to guard against them. It does not prescribe a specific system, though democratic values have clearly been suggested. Nations are free to adopt any system of rule that suits them provided it is accepted by the people as the traditional heritage of their society. However, the Holy Qur'an unambiguously advises Muslims to have a democratic system of government, though not necessarily on the pattern of Western style democracy. It only deals with principles of vital significance and leaves the rest to the people.

"Those who hearken to their Lord, and observe prayer, and whose affairs are decided by mutual consultation, and who spend out of what We have provided for them (42:39)."

The words 'whose affairs are administered by mutual consultation' relate to the political life of the Muslim society where its decisions are made through mutual consultation, reminiscent of government of the people, where the common will of the people becomes the ruling will of the people.

The Qur'an states, "Verily, Allah commands you to give over the trusts to those entitled to them, and that, when you judge between (or rule over) individuals, you judge (or rule) with justice

(4:59)." This verse characterizes the right to rule as a trust to be bestowed by people only on those who are well suited to discharge it, thus evoking government by the people. The words "when you judge between individuals, you judge with justice", admonish that when choosing a leader from among several individuals, justice, also defined as 'balance' or 'middle path', should be one's yardstick. In other words, although it is the right of the people to choose their leaders, it is also the responsibility of the people to choose their leaders with extreme care, choosing well-balanced individuals who are prone to act with moderation and deliberation in the affairs of the state.

Keeping justice in mind also applies to politicians who, when choosing a leader for their party, need to be mindful of the trust people have bestowed on them and vote for the person they know will be best for the people. Since justice is preferred to self-interest in the Qur'an as something to be dispensed "even though it be against your own selves or your kindred (4:136)," one would conclude that when nominating a candidate, a Muslim would shun self-interest and keep the interests of the entire nation in sight. Notable in this context is the omission of any reference to the religion of the person elected as ruler. The only criterion prescribed for an office is those entitled to them, meaning those who are suitably qualified. That the Islamic government is for the people, is evident from numerous traditions like: "If a person is in charge of the affairs of the people and does not strive diligently to promote their welfare, he will not enter Paradise with them."

We find similar words of advice related to the legislative process, justice system, due process, social welfare, economy, freedom of religion, pre-eminence of the rule of law, and foreign policy. This advice is meant for every individual to be taken personally through private perusal of the Qur'an, since we are all rulers in one sphere or another.

Q *Why do we need Islam, or any organized religion, when spirituality is personal and*

can be developed through exercises like Yoga and Tai Chi?

A Islam actually is all about one's relationship with God. The various situations that we find ourselves in are a means of choosing or rejecting God, several times a day. Through exercise of reason we make choices to please God. Most of these choices relate to our actions towards other individuals. For example, when we are honest in paying taxes, although the beneficiary appears to be the society, we are actually improving our own relationship with

God (spirituality). This is how exercise of morality leads to strengthening of spirituality. In Islam, you just cannot divorce spirituality from morality. It is just not possible to please God if we are hurting His creation in any way. But it is not enough to not hurt. If we are bypassing opportunities to help our fellow men, then too we are being negligent of our duty.

Many moral qualities do not come into play unless we are actively engaged in working with other people. For example, how can we forgive if we do not first get hurt? How can we suppress anger if we do not interact with others? How can one be a good husband or father without getting

married? My point is that spirituality practiced in isolation is of no good to society if it is not used to actively benefit others.

Thus, if the purpose of yoga is to enable one to exercise high moral qualities, then I am all for it. If tai chi helps create stillness of mind that leads to a cheerful and helpful disposition then I am all for it. But spirituality can lead to God only after it has been used to enhance morality. I do not see that in Tao culture.

It saddens me that I can only tell you what is right and what is wrong according to Islam, and not be able to point you to a particular country as an example.◆

Which is the true word of God?

WHO HAS SEEN GOD? AS RELATED BY JOHN OR BY: ABRAHAM, HAGAR, JACOB, MOSES, JOB, AND ISAIAH.

JOHN: "No man hath seen God at any time, the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, hath declared him."

JOHN 1.18

ABRAHAM: "And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the Lord appeared to Abram and said unto him, I am the Almighty God, walk before me, and be thou perfect." GENESIS 17.1

"And the lord appeared unto Abram on the plains of Mamre and he sat in the tent door in the heat of the day." GENESIS 18.1

HAGAR: "And she called the name of the Lord that spake unto her, Thou God seest me." GENESIS 16.13

JACOB: "I have seen God face to face and my life is preserved." GENESIS 32.30

MOSES: "The Lord God of your Fathers, the God of Abraham and of Isaac and of Jacob appeared unto me." EXODUS 3.16

"And the Lord spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend." EXODUS 33.11

JOB: "I have heard thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eyes seest thee." JOB 42.5

ISAIAH: "I saw also the Lord sitting upon the throne, high and lifted up and his train filled the temple." ISAIAH 6.1

To whom it may concern...

To whom it may concern

You know who you are

You say God has left you alone

With a perfect ring of scars

To whom it may concern

The prayers of the naïve

Are haunting you now because

Of the lies you once believed

To whom it may concern

You see the world in despair

You keep asking the question

"God, is this fair?"

To whom it may concern

Society adds another bullet in the gun

But now I can give you the truth

From which you cannot run

To whom it may concern

I have the answer for you

It's in a perfect book

Full of light, strong and true

To whom it may concern

His one Prophet showed the light

He spread Allah's loving message

He alone conquered the fight

To whom it may concern

His message reached all

This religion of peace

Will stop your trembling fall

To whom it may concern

He will guide you to the right path

He protects and loves His believers

Never sending them into darkened wrath

To whom it may concern

Your first step forward is what you're giving

Toward Allah's love and protection

For that is life worth living

To whom it may concern

You must look deep inside

The truth is in your heart

Now it is you who must realize

The truth and beauty are all here

For God's love your heart yearns

I write this poem to you

To whom it may concern

MariaAndleebAhmed

A Khilafat Centennial Message to Parliament



Khilafat Centenary celebrations continue as UK Member of Parliament hosts celebratory event at Westminster.

In an historic event at the Houses of Parliament, the Head of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jamaat, Hadhrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad was yesterday invited to address a number of senior members of Government, Parliamentarians and Ambassadors as Justine Greening MP, hosted a reception in celebration of the Khilafat Centenary, which is the system of spiritual leadership that unites Ahmadi Muslims around the world.

The event was attended by over 30 MPs including Rt Hon Hazel Blears MP, Secretary of State for Communities & Local Government; Dominic Grieve MP, the Shadow Home Secretary; Simon Hughes MP, the President of the Liberal Democrats; Gillian Merron MP, the Foreign Office Minister and Lord Eric Avebury who gave the vote of thanks. The event was sponsored by Justine Greening MP, in whose

constituency the first Ahmadi Mosque built in the UK, the 'Fazl Mosque', is based.

During her welcome address, Justine Greening MP, spoke of how the Fazl Mosque had played a key and vital role in the local community ever since it was built back in 1924. She said that it was indeed a privilege for her that the Headquarters of the Jamaat was based in her constituency. Her comments were echoed by Gillian Merron MP, the newly appointed Foreign Office Minister. She said it was a great honour to meet with the Head of the Jamaat and to be able to mark the Centenary of Khilafat. She said that the work of the Jamaat was crucial because it 'gave a voice to those who are marginalised'.

Commenting upon the continued persecution of Ahmadi Muslims in various countries she singled out Pakistan and Indonesia as countries where the situation appeared to be worsening. She said that the Foreign Office was committed to effecting the safeguarding of Human Rights in all countries.

Hadhrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad, the Head of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jamaat, used his address to speak about a number of contemporary issues that were affecting the peace of society both in the UK and the world at large. He also spoke about the role of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jamaat which he said was as the '*standard bearer and true representative of Islam*'. He said members of the Jamaat who lived in the UK were all completely loyal to the country because this was the teaching of the Founder of Islam, the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him).

His Holiness began his address by speaking of the great conflict that divided the world today. Wars were being fought in different parts of the world. He worried of even greater problems. He said:

"It is my fear that in view of the direction in which things are moving today, the political and economic dynamics of the countries of the world may lead to *world war*... Therefore, it is the duty of the superpowers to sit



In an historic event at the British Houses of Parliament, the Head of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jamaat, Hadhrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad was invited to address a number of senior members of Government, Parliamentarians and Ambassadors at a reception in celebration of the Khilafat Centenary, which is the system of spiritual leadership that unites Ahmadi Muslims around the world.

down and find a solution to save humanity from the brink of disaster.”

He said that the only way to avert further hostilities and disputes was for all Governments to act justly with their own people and in their dealings with other countries. He congratulated the British Government for having shown such qualities of fairness in its recent history. He cited its rule of pre-partition India as an example of its quality of fairness. Only if similar policies were adopted throughout the world could catastrophe be averted.

Turning towards ‘terrorism’ he said that no form of terror or violence was sanctioned in Islam and thus those who justified their heinous acts in its name were causing for the world to be distrustful and even hateful of the religion of Islam. As a consequence of this hate, certain non-Muslim groups or individuals had taken it upon themselves to attack Islam by defaming the character of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and the Holy Qur’an. Such acts he stated could never be right and that a mutual respect for all religions and beliefs was necessary for true peace to emerge.

His Holiness then discussed crime in society. He said Islam’s true teachings were to try and reform those who had done wrong. Revenge and retribution ought never to enter into the equation when debating the punishment of criminals or prisoners of war. Crime also had to be fought at its root cause which was the development of an unjust society. Thus countries had to be free to develop and cultivate their own natural resources without the fear of other more powerful nations ex-

plotting them and this was just as true at an individual level. This was the way forward. He said:

“Those countries that have been endowed with mineral resources should be allowed to develop and trade at fair prices and under open skies and one country should benefit from the resources of the other country. So, this would be the right way, the way that is preferred by God Almighty.”

Finally, His Holiness spoke of the current economic crisis that engulfed the entire world. He said the ‘credit crunch’ ought to be taken as a warning that the western system of interest based capitalism was wholly incompatible with a fair and just society. He said that though interest could appear to increase a person’s capital, in the long term this was never true.

Following the keynote address of His Holiness various other MPs took to the stage. Hazel Blears MP spoke of how she had greatly admired the keynote address which she had found to be ‘*pertinent, contemporary and challenging*’.

She said that the speech that had just been delivered was the type of speech that was rarely delivered by politicians because it was so cogent and clear to the point. The Jamaat’s message of ‘*Love for All, Hatred for None*’ was as important as it was simple because it was a message that led to unity rather than division. She further mentioned how she brought with her the best wishes of the Prime Minister, Gordon Brown who had personally sent her to attend the event.

A regular at events hosted by the Ah-

madiyya Muslim Jamaat, Dominic Grieve MP, said he took great pleasure at finally being able to host the Jamaat. He praised the Jamaat for its ‘*wonderful contribution in all aspects of life*’ which he said was due to its policy of integration rather than exclusion. He too said that he took great pride in the fact that the Headquarters of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jamaat were in London. Simon Hughes MP said that the plight of the Jamaat in various countries illustrated the point that religious freedom had not yet been achieved and that the Government had to work towards bringing about such freedoms in all countries.

The event was concluded by a vote of thanks given by Lord Eric Avebury who spoke of how the keynote address had ‘*underlined the moral dimension that we must all follow*’. This His Holiness had done by speaking of both conflict prevention and conflict solution. Lord Avebury then spoke of the continued persecution of Ahmadi Muslims in Pakistan and said that organisations such as Khatme-Nabuwat perpetrated hatred against Ahmadi Muslims in such a way that people here in the UK could never understand. He concluded by thanking His Holiness for his ‘*wise words of wisdom*’.

Following the event Hadhrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad was given a guided tour of the Houses of Parliament and held private audiences with Nick Clegg MP, the Leader of the Liberal Democrats and Lord Bishop Nazir Ali. ♦

Responsibilities of Muslim citizens in a non-Muslim Government



By Saba Ahmad Naseem

Islam- the word means peace, security, wholesome, and submission to God, which not only describes the teachings of the Muslim religion, but incorporates who they are in all aspects of their life. A Muslim has two responsibilities- the first being his service to God and the second being his service to Mankind.

To understand the responsibilities of Muslims to mankind, they should emulate the examples of the Holy Prophet and the Promised Messiah. This responsibility includes understanding their duty to the country in which they reside. During the time of the Promised Messiah many Muslims were violently opposed to the British Government. The Promised Messiah taught Muslims to be upstanding citizens of the empire under which they were given the freedom to practice their religion. The Promised Messiah encouraged service and amiable relations with the government of the British monarchy. Islam, however, does not endorse any specific political system outright, although it seems that a democratic government is preferred in the Holy Qur'an. The Holy Qur'an states, "Verily, Allah commands you to give over the trust to those entitled to them, and that when you judge between men, you judge with justice. And surely excellent is what Allah admonishes you with! Allah is All-Hearing, All-Seeing." (Chapter 4 Verse 59) From this quote, one can deduce two pillars under the Islamic concept of democracy: the democratic process of elections must be based on trust and integrity and governments must function on the principle of absolute justice.

The concept to understand from this verse is that Muslim's should exercise their right to vote. It's a matter of personal integrity and God commands Muslims to participate in the civic duty of electing a deserving leader. Is-

lam gives precedence to civic duty over individuality as God expects man do to service to mankind and not to himself. In his book, Islam's Response to Contemporary Issues, Mirza Tahir Ahmad^{RA}. Khalifatul Masih IV says, "Every voter must participate fully in exercising his vote during the elections unless he is unable to do so. Otherwise, he will have failed in the discharge of his own trust. The concept of abstention or refraining from exercising the vote, as happens in the USA where reportedly almost half the electorate actually both- ers to vote, has no room in the Islamic concept of democracy."

With this commandment from Allah comes the responsibility to place the trust where it rightfully belongs. God is always watching over and therefore everyone will be held responsible for their decisions. The decision must be based on the principle of absolute justice- no partisan interest or political consideration should be permitted to influence the process of decision making. If a political party has nominated a candidate, who an individual member considers will fail to discharge his national trust, that member should quit the party rather than vote for someone who does not deserve the trust. (Ahmad 233)

By handing over one's trust, one is deliberately sacrificing some personal freedoms so that the entitled leaders can lay a framework for society to function. In other words, every individual is giving the leaders the responsibility to enact laws for the people of that land. Therefore, a Muslim is obliged to act on the laws given to them by the leaders to whom they gave the responsibility to lay down the laws in the first place. In the Holy Qur'an, Allah says, "O ye who believe! Obey Allah, and obey His Messenger and those who are in authority among you. Then if you differ in anything refer it to Allah and His Messenger if you are believers in Allah and the Last Day." (Chapter 4 Verse 60) This verse explains that even if a Muslim does not agree with all the laws of the land, respect and obedience should never be disregarded. If the government allows Muslims to practice their religion in peace, then it is incumbent on Muslims to live as well-wishers in that country.

There are instances where the law of the land is looser than Islamic injunction, sometimes it is stricter, and at other times it is contradictory. If the law is looser, then each individual has the freedom to practice Islamic Shariah. In the case of a stricter law; for example, in Islam having up to four wives is permitted. In the United States, however, polygamy is prohibited. So if a Muslim is living

"...love for one's country is part of our faith. All the citizens of a country...are brothers; and helping brothers is obligatory."

Mirza Masroor Ahmad, Khalifatul Masih V

in the United States, he must live monogamously because Allah does not command a Muslim to have more than one wife and therefore the law does not contradict Islamic Shariah. In the case of a law that contradicts the Islamic injunction one can refer to the example (Sunnah) of the Holy Prophet. Since the early Muslims were not allowed to practice their religion in Mecca, they first tried to convince the authority that they should be given the right. When that did not work, they practiced in privacy, and when that failed, the Muslims emigrated. Even then persecution continued, only then did Muslims stand up to fight for the freedom of religion.

As mentioned before, the second responsibility of a Muslim is service to mankind which begins at the community level. They should first start with their neighbors- help them, respect them, and regard them as if their own blood relatives. They should be active members of the community- participate in elections, help the homeless, support the army, and give allegiance to their country. In his inaugural address on April 17, 2008 at Jalsa Salana Ghana, Mirza Masroor Ahmad, Khalifatul Masih V said "Ahmadis should remember that if an Ahmadi is not rendering his dues to the country he is not fulfilling the purpose of his bai'at (ten conditions for being a member of the Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam)....you should also excel others in working for the progress of the country. Keep away from disorder and remain loyal to the government....love for ones country is part of our faith. All the citizens of a country...are brothers; and helping brothers is obligatory."

(English translation)

Once again, we see how the word Islam describes every aspect of the state- physical and spiritual- of being Muslim. We have to live up to the name of Islam and spread it among us. No matter what government Muslims are living under and whose rule, they should always live by the morals taught by Islam which includes obedience to the laws of the land. In this way, they will be contributing to a safer and more peaceful society, an Islamic society.

VIEWPOINT

"GEO TV's

Aalim Online Abets Terror in Pakistan"

Originally published in the *Pakistan Christian Post*, September 22, 2008

By Dr. Sohail Husain, Assistant Professor of Medicine, Yale University

As we in the US commemorated the tragedy of 9/11, there were calls to end world terror. But it is disturbing to know that the situation in Pakistan is not any better. On September 7th, GeoTV, a leading Pakistani television channel that has also wide viewership via cable networks in North America, aired a special program on 'Aalim Online,' a religious broadcast hosted by anchor Dr. Aamir Liaquat Hussain. Mullahs from various sects were invited to malign the non-violent Ahmadiyya Muslim Community. Repeatedly, Dr. Hussain and his fellow Mullahs stated that Ahmadis were 'worthy of death' ('wajib-ul-qatl') and that all of their religious activities in Pakistan should be terminated.

Within two days of the 'fatwa,' masked assailants murdered two prominent Ahmadis in the Sindh province. Both were heads of their local Ahmadiyya Community chapters. The first, Dr. Abdul Mannan Siddiqi, age 46 years, was an American citizen, a physician who was trained in cardiology in Philadelphia. He returned to his land of birth in Mirpurkas, Sindh when his father called him back with the express purpose of serving the poor and needy of the area. To this end, he operated a hospital in Mirpurkas as well as free clinics in remote areas of Tharparker. As a physician who has served in similar regions, I cannot but fathom the loss of service to humanity with Dr. Siddiqi's murder. Ironically, he was shot while finishing medical rounds at his hospital. The second Ahmadi victim, Mr. Sate Muhammad Yusuf, age 70 years, was local Community head of Nawabshah, Sindh. His assailants targeted an elderly man who could hardly ascend a flight of stairs. Both murders occurred shortly after the 'fatwa' of death to Ahmadis issued by the Mullahs on 'Aalim Online.'

So what are the issues here? First, GeoTV was irresponsible in airing an incitement to violence. Even if the assailants had not expeditiously carried out the Mullah's order, as they did, the urging of viewers to kill is a basic breach of ethical principles and, frankly, the laws of most countries. In the wake of the murders, this point has been highlighted by several agencies including the International Federation of Journalists and Asia Human Rights Commission. But second, and perhaps most disturbing about the state of affairs in Pakistan, is that while the world mourned lost lives from 9/11, GeoTV's 'Aalim Online' aired its special program in celebration of the 34th anniversary of the Pakistani government's constitutional amendment declaring Ahmadis to be 'non-Muslims.' Notably, host Dr. Hussain is a former Pakistani Minister for Religious Affairs.

Thus the real war on terror demands a rebuke of elements in Pakistan's media, clergy, and its discriminatory laws. GeoTV should apologize, retract its incitement to violence, and remove its fiery anchor from 'Aalim Online.' Further, to promote free speech,



opportunities should be given to the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community to directly provide its actual beliefs. Conversely, the hate-filled Mullah of Pakistan should be censored from further calls to murder, as no sane nation would accept such acts as constituting free speech. Furthermore, the laws of Pakistan instituted to promote intolerance against Ahmadis or any other religious minority should be repealed. It is neither the job of media, mullah, nor government to play God.

Finally, the lessons of 9/11 are that as a global community and as Americans there is a greater need to understand one another. Our tragedies of recent and past demand that we consult our sources directly. For this reason, I invite readers to visit any of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Mosques in North America or to log onto www.alislam.org, its official website, to know the superlative love that Ahmadis hold for their Master Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, and the peaceful Islam that he taught. The response from the Khalifa of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad, on 9/12 is most telling. He cited the Holy Quran's message (2:154-157) of patience, perseverance, and prayer, especially during this holy month of Ramadan, against the murderous calls and deeds of the Mullah. It is hopeful that most Pakistanis, who are fair-minded, would subscribe to the same message of peace. Perhaps this is what the Mullahs fear most.

Economic crisis is just plain greed

“Vaulting ambition, which o’erleaps itself and falls on the other” ~ Macbeth

By Sardar Anees Ahmad

Today, pundits and politicians are debating the causes of a global economic crisis whose severity has not been seen since the 1930’s. In truth, it is not capitalism, socialism, or any other ‘ism’ which is to blame. Never the ‘ism’, it is the greed of man which has brought on today’s grave, and potentially lengthy, global crisis.

The subprime mortgage crisis is a prime example. American banks indulgence in predatory lending allowed the original lenders to avoid all risk, while dumping the entire economic burden on the loanee and other banking institutions. In 2007 alone, Americans made \$950 billion in mortgage equity withdrawals. These loans borrowed mortgage capital to finance superfluous purchases, making no positive contribution to the larger economy. When clients could not repay the loan, a credit crunch ensued making it harder to procure a loan. This very dilemma drove the investment banking giant Lehman Brothers, whose revenue in 2007 alone was \$59 billion, to its knees. Even more shocking, Joseph Stiglitz, 2001 Nobel Laureate in Economics, notes that Europe suffered more than America as a result of the crisis.

In a globalized economy, what affects America affects the entire world. Today, individual greed has transformed into a universal epidemic. “If you steal from another,” warned Immanuel Kant, “you steal from yourself.” Consequently, nations’ foreign investments have lost value and demand for natural resources has plummeted. Individuals are also spending less on leisure, depression be-



coming contagious. As said earlier, when banks hesitated to offer loans the markets gridlocked. The credit system froze, government’s purchasing power fell as imports far exceed exports, and stagnation and unemployment followed. According to Stiglitz, “America’s financial institutions ... didn’t manage risk, they created risk.” With the mortgage crisis, then, the very instrument employed to encourage growth, i.e. low interest rates, generated a recession. World-renown intellectual Prof. Noam Chomsky warns that the housing crisis is not even the worst of our troubles: “There’s a major crisis coming along which is going to dwarf this one, and that’s the growth in medical costs ... [a] highly inefficient medical system is going to swamp the federal budget.” Noting the crisis’ far-reaching effects, Stiglitz adds, “We have a social calamity on our hands, not just an economic calamity.”

Why was the problem not checked early on? The problem is that unwarranted risk is an integral part of the global financial system. Even well managed investment banks ignore systemic risk, the risk the entire system is subject to, in favor of individual interests. When President Richard Nixon dismantled the post-WWII international economic order (the Bretton Woods system) it was predicted that the resulting financial liberalization, and the ensuing excessive borrowing, would bring on more frequent and more severe financial cri-

ses. Incidentally, an International Monetary Fund working paper recently noted that 124 systemic banking crises occurred from 1970–2007.

Man must therefore learn to live within his means, and be ever conscience of his fellow man’s well-being. It is because of the tendency to borrow from one’s future, to indulge in excessive borrowing, to succumb to transient wishes, and to encourage detrimental socio-economic effects that the Qur’an (2:280) declares those who indulge in usury are at war with Allah.

Islam argues that an economic system rooted in social welfare and which, through financial instruments, does not promote extravagant living can thrive in any political environment. In this regard, Islam has instituted a charitable flat-tax on idle capital known as Zakaat. Known as one of the ‘Five Pillars of Islam’, Zakaat is a 2.5% tax that, unlike usury, punishes the hoarding of money, ensuring that some level of capital is always circulating in the economy. That is not to say that Zakaat alone can run a global economy. Rather, that because this tax specifically aims to increase of net social welfare, it lessens the problems associated with asymmetric information and systemic risk.

It is our humble submission, then, that the only cure from the self-serving crises of today is to adapt the service-oriented socio-economic philosophy of Islam. ♦

Originally printed in the 11/09/08
edition of *Boston Globe*

“Grateful Citizen”

By Sardar Anees Ahmad,
Waterloo, New York

To our President-Elect:

I wish to convey my sincerest thanks:

Thank you for demonstrating that the underdog has a chance. Thank you for making it cool to be intelligent and accomplished.

Thank you for proving that credentials, not color, win the public's heart.

Thank you for confirming that politics and public service are compatible.

Thank you for embodying an alternative to an apparent clash of civilizations.

Thank you for beginning the restoration of America's global image.

Thank you for restoring faith in the American idea back into America.

Thank you, President Barack Obama.

Published 9/17/08 edition of
Baltimore Examiner

“Doctor Killed by Fatwa Martyr for Tolerance”

By Faheem Younus Qureshi,
Baltimore, Maryland

Being a staff physician at the same hospital, I feel like in some ways that Dr. [Abdul Mannan] Siddiqi was the Daniel Pearl of Franklin Square Hospital. It was the same unshaken belief in the service of humanity that convinced him to pack up from Baltimore and follow a calling to serve the underprivileged in Pakistan. For 16 years he organized free clinics for thousands only to be the victim of a fatwa (religious decree) issued by a popular TV program that members of Ahmadiyya Muslim Community are “worthy of death.” A day later, masked assailants killed him in the name of religion.

Originally printed in the 9/9/08
edition of *Record-Journal
Meriden* (Connecticut)

“Insulted”

By Dr. Sohail Husain, Meriden,
Connecticut

At the Republican National Convention, former New York Republican Mayor Rudolph Giuliani exclaimed: “The Democrats were afraid to use the words ‘Islamic Terrorism’ . . . Please tell me who are they insulting? They are insulting terrorists.”

Well, the comment was insulting to me and millions of U.S. Muslims, who are peace-loving, law-abiding citizens and many of whom served proudly in uniform. National political conventions should bring a nation together, rather than dividing a nation by bigotry. I invite Mr. Giuliani to my local mosque in Meriden, especially now during the month of Ramadhan, to see for himself what Islam really is.

Published The Doves of Zion
Newsletter, 11/5/08

“The People Have Spoken”

By Hasan Hakeem, Zion, IL

The people have spoken and have selected Senator Barack Hussein Obama as the President-Elect of these United States of America. We congratulate him for a well run campaign that overcame the last bastion of the desperate – fear.

Obama weathered attacks on his supposed Muslim faith, citizenship status, charges of infanticide, ties with shadowy characters, and an alleged lack of patriotism. Opponents tried to connect the dots of controversial issues like same-sex marriage, homosexuals in the military, pornography and gun restrictions to Obama, but here too they failed.

A word about fear...it is a good, short-term motivator. Fearful people can be compelled

*As an African American,
who is a member of the
Ahmadiyya Muslim
Community, I am proud to
be a citizen in a nation that
has finally elected an
African-American to the
highest office of the land. It
is my prayer that this will
be the beginning of a
deeper healing to the
deepest wound in our
nation's history.*

to go to the polls and vote against someone. Within fear, however, reside the seeds of its own demise. When fear takes root, it bears the poisoned fruit of defeat and despair. Republican fear could not overcome Democratic hope.

The world should also pay attention to how Americans are able to hold democratic elections without the exclusions of minorities, as is the case in many third world countries.

As an African American, who is a member of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, I am proud to be a citizen in a nation that has finally elected an African-American to the highest office of the land. It is my prayer that this will be the beginning of a deeper healing to the deepest wound in our nation's history.

And Mr. President-Elect Obama is in my prayers. May that “righteous wind” stay at his back as he begins to build his governing team. May he, with God's help, protect our nation for many future generations to come.

Now, we must include President-Elect Obama, his wife and family in our prayers. We as Ahmadi Muslims must also do whatever we can do to help this nation grow and prosper in the future as One nation, under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

What is Islam?

Islam is the religion, which is wrongly called Mohammedanism.

1. Islam means:

Peace Resignation

The significance of the name Islam is the attainment of a life of perfect peace, and eternal happiness through complete resignation to the Will of God.

2. Absolutely uncompromising monotheism is the central teaching of Islam. "La-Ilaha, Illallah Muhammadur-Rasululla." "There is none worthy of worship but one and the only God (Allah), who possesses all excellences, and Muhammad is His prophet." This is the most important doctrine of Islam. Furthermore, Islam helps us to establish a permanent relationship with God and to realize Him during our earthly life as our Helper in all our affairs and undertakings.

3. Islam requires belief in all the prophets and spiritual guides including Abraham, Moses, Jesus, Krishna, Buddha and Confucius. Islam represents the completion of the mission of all the prophets from the earliest dawn of history: that in fact all the prophets of God came with one and the same mission. Thus Islam establishes peace between all religions.



4. Quran, the Moslem Scripture---the word of God was revealed to the Master-prophet Muhammad over thirteen hundred years ago and has been preserved intact without the slightest change. There are millions and millions of Moslems who know the whole Book by heart. It is an inexhaustible mine of the spiritual truths which satisfy the needs of all peoples of all countries.

5. The establishment of true democracy and universal brotherhood without any discrimination of caste, creed, color or country is the unique and unrivalled distinction of Islam. Islam has not only propounded but fulfilled and realized the splendid principles of democracy in the actual life and action of human society.

6. Following are a few of the specific peculiarities of Islam:

■ Liberation of women by establishing the equality of both sexes, safeguarding their rights and liberties and raising their status.

■ Absolute veto on all intoxicants.

■ Solution of economic problems.

■ The furnishing of humanity with the noblest practical ethics.

■ The promotion of science and education.

7. Following are some of the obligatory duties of Islam:

■ Daily prayers.

■ Fasting in the month of Ramadan.

■ Fixed almsgiving and charity.

■ Pilgrimage once in one's lifetime, provided circumstances allow.

8. According to Islam life after death is the continuation of life on earth. Heaven and Hell begin right from here. Heaven is eternal and everlasting, while Hell is only temporary. Hell is a hospital treatment for the human soul, which as soon as it cured, goes to to Heaven. Heaven is the attainment of a life of everlasting progress and complete joy and happiness through union with God and by the development of the fine spiritual qualities and the unlimited capacities that have been implanted in man. ♦

Obsession, Radical Islam's War against the West: A Response From the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community

Maulana Mubasher Ahmad

The documentary film "OBSESSION: Radical Islam's War against the West" presents dreadful and graphic scenes taken from the Arab TV showing radical Muslims all over the world preaching hatred and exciting violence and Jihad against the West and the United States of America. It is a propaganda film prepared to scare the Christians and to get sympathy for Jews and Israel. The following response to the documentary film was presented on June 9, 2007 at the Annual Meeting of the Northern Illinois Conference Evangelical Association held at St. Charles, Illinois. After listening to the response, many Christian clergymen criticized the film and said that it was prepared with wrong motives.

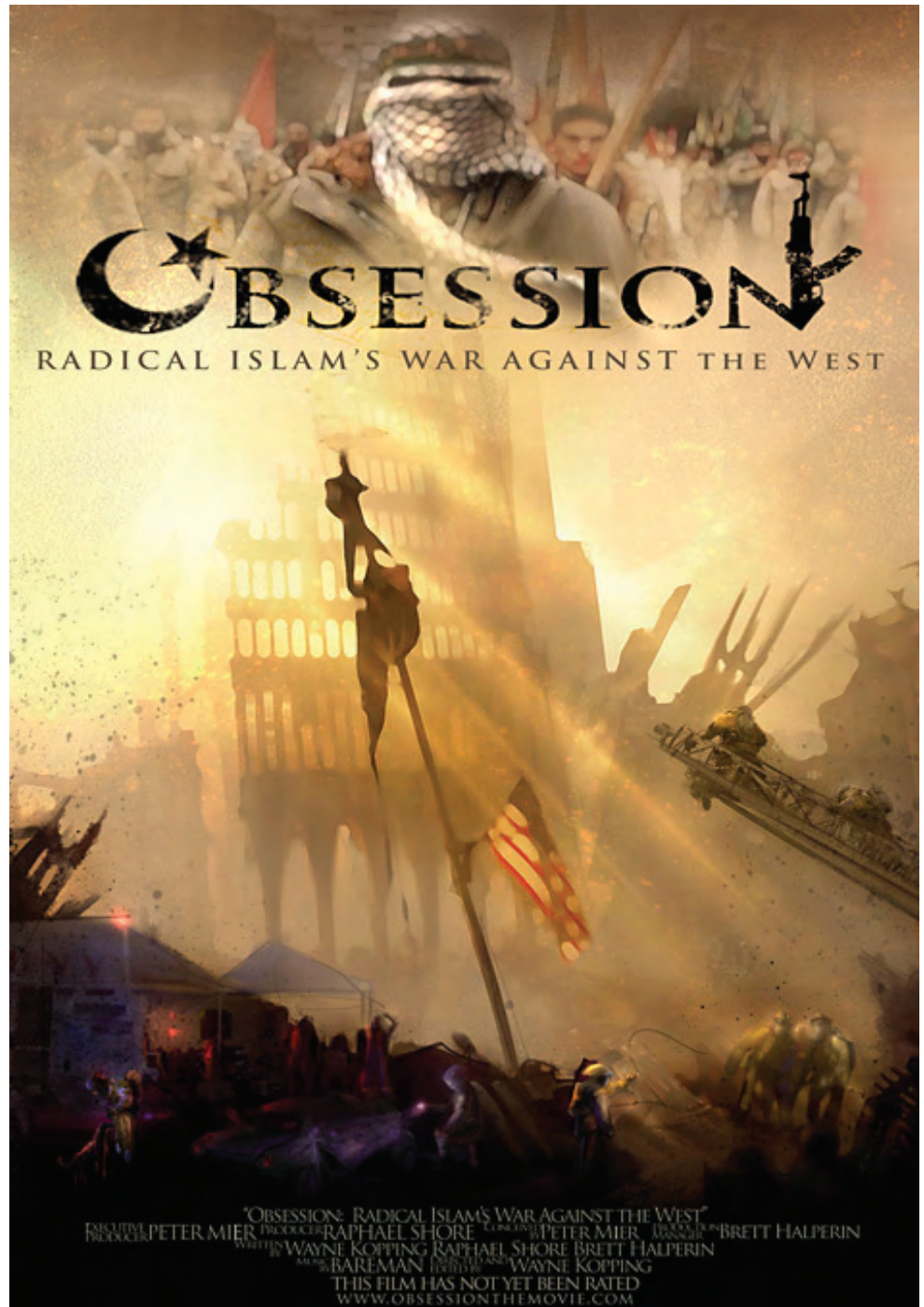
In the name of God, the Gracious, the Merciful.

O Lord, our God, help us to have our hearts united in nourishing and serving Life, and grant us wisdom and strength to counter the evil of those who preach violence and promote death!

O our Loving God, let the compassion, mercy, and forgiveness — as preached and practiced by Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) against his bitterest of enemies — replace anger, revenge, violence and oppression!

O Lord, our God, let the unconditional love — as taught by Jesus Christ — prevail over hatred and animosity that overshadow our times!

O our Merciful God! Let the light of Justice and Peace dispel the pitch darkness of war and injustice! Enable us — the Children of Abraham — Christians, Muslims and Jews — to stand together in unity to help those who are victims of transgression in any form at any place! Amen.



Religious Extremism in Islam

First, we should be honest in self-criticism, and try truthfully to identify the causes of the war waged by radical Muslims against

the West, particularly the United States of America.

We should acknowledge the fact that for millions of Muslims all over the world, the image of America is troublesome: To them it seems as if the USA is determined to invade,

occupy or dominate the oil-rich Muslim countries for economical gains. America calls for freedom and democracy, but at the same time it has supported world's worst authoritarian dictators and oppressive governments in the past, such as the Shah of Iran and Pakistani army dictator General Zia-ul-Haq. The Muslim public feels that the U.S.A.'s attitude towards Israel is different as compared with the Muslim countries. Israel's illegal occupation of Palestinian land, establishing illegal settlements, and use of force is not condemned by America. But any Palestinian resistance to Israeli illegal occupation is denounced as "terrorism" and is responded by Israel with overwhelming armed attacks. This causes further radicalization of resistance factions in Palestine and elsewhere in the Muslim world.

America is known as providing financial help in support of the military strength of Israel to maintain its illegal occupation of Palestinian lands. The radical Muslims resent the fact that Israel is getting \$3 to \$6 billion of American taxpayers' money every year. It equals to 15 million dollars each day. This financial aid is perceived as being used against the Muslims. They see the atrocities committed against their children, women and civilians conducted by means of the American money are convinced that the state of Israel also possesses weapons of mass destruction.

In addition, we should also understand that America's close connection with the oil-rich Saudi Arabia is seen with suspicion by the Muslim radicals. The holy cities of Mecca and Medina are located in Saudi Arabia. The US armed forces' presence in Saudi Arabia to protect the Saudi monarchy and its oil fields provides fuel to the fire to the radical Muslim agitators. The fact which is not well known to most of the Americans is that the Saudis profess a radical form of Islam known as Wahhabism, and the Saudi Kingdom most generously funds the theological schools known as madrasas all over the world. We should know that these madrasas are the breeding incubators of radicalism in Islam. In these madrasas, orphan and poor boys are admitted and trained to become Mujahideen. They are trained to make explosives and other weapons, and how to use them. Also, the students are brain-

The documentary "OBSESSION" was released in 2006, but it fails to show the response of the West against radical Muslims. It is completely silent to the fact that a global war against terrorism has been leashed out by the West and is still going on with full force.

washed to become suicidal bombers. The Wahhabi Saudis also provide training to the imams (religious leaders) from all over the world—including the United States. These imams, trained in Saudi Arabia, come to the Western countries and lead Muslim congregations teaching and preaching radicalism to the young Muslims attending their mosques.

The documentary "OBSESSION" was released in 2006, but it fails to show the response of the West against radical Muslims. It is completely silent to the fact that a global war against terrorism has been leashed out by the West and is still going on with full force.

Within hours of September 11 attacks, Muslim leaders worldwide, including all major Islamic organizations in the United States denounced the attacks as sinful and illegal acts from Islamic perspective. The majority of Muslims all over the world believed that the 9/11 attacks could not be acts of Jihad because all the victims were civilians, including several Muslim individuals.

In response, the United States immediately decided not only to eliminate the perpetrators of the 9/11 attacks, but also punish those who harbored them—the suspect list included Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Sudan, and Iran. The War on terrorism started with attacks on Afghanistan—one of the poorest, most remote, and least industrialized countries on earth. The United States and its allies took military action and toppled the Taliban which had given the leaders of al-Q'idah sanctuary in Afghanistan; destroyed the terrorist infrastructure, killed or captured a majority of al-Q'idah's leadership; cut off al-Q'idah's funding and seized its effects, thus severely damaged the organization led by the suspect terrorist Osama bin Laden. Over 2000 al-Q'idah and its allied Sunni militants have been killed so far. More than 3,000 civilians were

killed in Afghanistan as a result of U.S. bombing with number of injured estimated to be in the tens of thousands.

The al-Q'idah leader, Osama Bin Laden is still alive. We must realize the fact that killing or capturing Bin Laden would not end terrorism. On the contrary, new generations of terrorists are already creeping up in various parts of the world. Political turbulence in the Middle East has helped a new breed of al-Q'idah-style militants to gain footholds where they had rarely been active on such a scale. Every day a new movement is born. Dozens of groups that have declared themselves as franchises of al-Q'idah or modeled themselves on it have appeared in recent years in Gaza Strip, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, Egypt, Algeria, Pakistan and Yemen. The alleged plot to attack New York's John F. Kennedy International airport shows that such groups are now breeding in Trinidad, Tobago and Guyana. Thus the south of the U.S.A. is not safe. Potential threats of attacks are now coming from Caribbean and Latin America as well. Therefore, it seems that so far the war on terrorism is proving counter-productive.

After Afghanistan, we went after Iraq. The whole world knows well that Iraq had no role in September 11 attacks and had no established connection with al-Q'idah. However, after 9/11 attacks, the U.S. government claimed that Iraq was a threat to the United States on the pretext that Iraq could begin to use its alleged Weapons of Mass Destruction to aid terrorist groups.

The Muslims of the world saw this just an excuse to dominate a region that was rich in oil, and it had nothing to do with the allegation of having weapons of mass destruction. Invasion of Iraq was launched on March 20, 2003. Saddam's regime was quickly toppled, and only 40 days after the invasion, on May 1, 2003,

President Bush claimed victory in Iraq. But do we really have a victory in Iraq? The war is still going on.

In Vietnam, the US spent a total of \$120 billion to fight the war for eight and a half years. This year, the Senate has approved \$120 billion war-funding only for the current year! The total cost of Iraq War is in excess of \$1.2 trillion! More than 3,500 U.S. soldiers have been killed, and more than 22,000 U.S. Military personnel have been wounded in action so far. An estimated 67,000 Insurgents have been killed or detained. In addition, more than 600,000 Iraqi civilians have been killed [Washington Post] thus causing a tremendous increase in the suffering of ordinary people among the Muslims. And we wonder why the radicals among them hate America!! Still we want to know why the radical Muslims are crying "Death to America!" Millions of Iraqi Muslims—nearly 15% of the population—have fled their homes since the invasion in 2003 [UNICEF]. Half the refugees are children.

Jihad in Islam

As the term *Jihad* has been repeated many times in the documentary, therefore, please allow me to explain what Jihad in Islam is! It is a great tragedy in the history of Islam that the concept of Jihad was distorted by over-zealous preachers and radical Muslim scholars. The founder of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (may peace be on him) recognized this dangerous trend that was entirely contrary to the teachings of the Qur'an. More than 100 years ago, in his book entitled "The British Government and Jihad," published in AD 1900 in India, he wrote:

"It should be remembered that today's Islamic scholars (who are called maulvis) completely misunderstand Jihad and misrepresent it to general public. The public's violent instincts are inflamed as a result and they are stripped of all noble human virtues... I know for certain that the maulvis who persist in propagating these blood-spattered doctrines are in fact responsible for murders committed by ignorant, egotistical people... They should remember that their understanding of Jihad is not correct, and human sympathy and compassion are its first casualties." (Pp. 8-9)



This is a scanned image of a Clarion Fund-sponsored newspaper advertising supplement containing a DVD called "Obsession: Radical Islam's War Against the West." Newspapers that carried the advertisement and DVD critical of radical Muslims have faced complaints from readers and questions about whether newspapers should offer a platform to everyone willing to pay for distribution.

"May God bring these maulvis back to the right path! They have misled the populace into believing that the keys to Paradise lie in beliefs that are oppressive, cruel, and completely immoral..."

Is it not shameful that a complete stranger should be unjustly killed while occupying his daily affairs, thus widowing his wife, making his children orphans, and turning his house into a funeral parlor? Which hadith (saying of the Prophet) or verse of the Qur'an authorizes such behavior? ... Foolish people hear the word Jihad, and make it an excuse for fulfillment of their own low desires. Or perhaps it is sheer madness that inclines them towards bloodshed." (Pp. 14-15)

"The tradition prevalent among the Muslims of attacking the people of other religions, which they call Jihad, is not Jihad of the Divine religious Law (Islamic Shariah). Rather, it is a grievous sin and

a violation of the clear instructions of God and His prophet." (P. 20)

Thus, he gave a clear verdict that to kill innocent people in the name of Jihad is forbidden in Islam. Anyone who wages war on false pretext is an enemy of God. Furthermore, he predicted that those who engage in terrorist acts in the name of Jihad shall be utterly humiliated and defeated in the end!

Sanctity of Life: The Holy Qur'an teaches sanctity of human life and reaffirms the Biblical teachings that whosoever unjustly kills a single person, it shall be as if he slaughtered all mankind; and whosoever saves the life of one, it shall be as if he had protected the life of all mankind (5:33). "You kill not the life which God has made sacred" (6:152). Killing of the innocent and committing suicide both are grievous sins in Islam. The Quran forbids suicide (4:30), and it is an unforgivable sin in Islam.

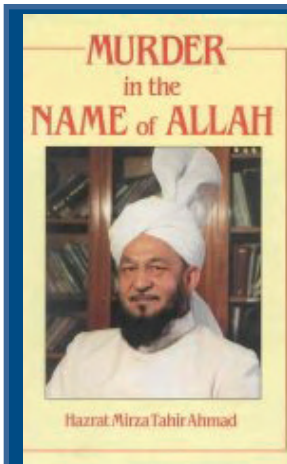
The Qur'an gives comprehensive instructions against all evil thoughts and plans, all kinds of abusive behavior and every form of cruelty and inequity. The Qur'an gives injunctions to protect the person, property, honor or good name of another person. The Qur'an declares it in unambiguous words, God does not love those who create disorder on earth (5:65) and (28:77); He does not love who are unjust (3:57); and does not love those who exceed the limits (2:191) and (5:88).

The Qur'an gives comprehensive instructions against all evil thoughts and plans, all kinds of abusive behavior and every form of cruelty and inequity. The Qur'an gives injunctions to protect the person, property, honor or good name of another person. The Qur'an declares it in unambiguous words, God does not love those who create disorder on earth (5:65) and (28:77); He does not love who are unjust (3:57); and does not love those who exceed the limits (2:191) and (5:88).

What is the true meaning of Jihad? Jihad does not mean "Holy War." It means striving, contention and taking action dedicated to a noble cause: In Arabic language, Jihad is a verbal noun derived from the root jahada, which is defined as exerting one's utmost power, effort, endeavor, or ability in contending with an object of disapprobation (An Arabic-English Lexicon, Edward Lane).

As a matter of fact, Jihad in Islam is of different kinds. Various terms have been used to make distinction between them, such as: Jihad of the heart, Jihad of the tongue, and Jihad with the pen. The greatest Jihad in Islam is remaining firm in faith, and to overcome sinful temptations of one's own self.

Jihad in the Bible: For Christians it would be easy to understand the concept of Jihad by some examples taken from the Bible: In Luke 13:22-24, the Bible says about Jesus Christ, "And he went through the cities and villages, teaching, and journeying towards Jerusalem. Then said one unto him, 'Lord, are there few to be saved?' And he said unto them: Strive to enter in that narrow gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able." This striving and making an utmost effort to enter the narrow gate—that the Holy Qur'an calls it the straight path) is the highest form of Jihad in Islam.



We need to wage an information war against the hate-preaching Mullahs and against their perverted ideology of Jihad. The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community has taken the lead to rebut modern day radical scholars such as Maulana Maududi, Hasan Al-Banna, Sayyid Qutb and 'Abd al-Salam Faraj. All are invited to read Murder in the Name of Allah (1953) by Hadhrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad – the 4th Spiritual Head of the International Ahmadiyya Muslim Community.

From the Islamic perspective, St. Paul was asking the Philippians to engage in a Jihad when he wrote to them,

That ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind, striving together for the faith of the gospel. (Philippians 1: 27)

In Islam, striving by means of the Qura'n is called the Great Striving—Jihadan Kabiran (25:53).

Again, in the First Epistle to Timothy, St. Paul wrote,

This charge I commit onto you ... fight a good fight; holding faith, and a good conscience. (Timothy, 1:18)

In the same Epistle, St. Paul wrote,

But they that will be rich fall into temptation and snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. But you, O man of God, flee from these things and follow after righteousness, goodness, faith, love, patience, meekness. Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto you are also called, and have professed a good profession before many witnesses. (Timothy, 6:9-12)

This fighting the good fight, holding

faith and good conscience, laying hold of eternal life is what we call the real Jihad in Islam. It is entering through the narrow gate. It is staying on the straight path.

The next form of Jihad is the struggle to improve the quality of social life by removing societal evils and establishing good moral values. This is Jihad against poverty, ignorance, disease, hunger, immorality and crime. Social and moral reformation under the guidance of the Qur'n is called the "Jihadan Kabiran"—a "mighty striving"—the Great Jihad (25:53). The last form of Jihad is to repel an armed aggression in self-defense for maintaining religious freedom. As compared to other forms of Jihad, fighting against an armed and aggressive enemy is called in Islam Jihad an Saghiran—the lesser Jihad.

The Qur'an says, Permission to fight is given to those against whom war is made because they have been wronged—and Allah indeed has power to help them—Those who have been driven out of their homes unjustly only because they said, 'Our Lord is Allah'—And if Allah did not repel some men by means of others, there would surely have been pulled down cloisters and churches and

synagogues and mosques wherein the name of Allah is oft commemorated. And Allah will surely help one who helps Him. Allah is indeed Powerful, Mighty— (22:40-41)

This concept of Jihad is closer to the Christian doctrine of “just war.” But it is not called a “holy war” in Islam. Modern Western thought, strongly influenced by Crusades-era terminology of “holy war,” tries to portray Jihad as an Islamic war against all the non-Muslims. But most clearly, the permission to fight back is not to destroy the churches, temples or synagogues. On the contrary, the Qur’an makes clear that it is to protect them along with protecting the mosques. In other words, it is to protect religious freedom for all those who worship God in accordance with their own faith traditions.

The great spiritual Jihad of standing firm in faith against satanic temptations and social evils is of permanent nature—an ongoing obligation for all the Muslims. But the lesser Jihad, fighting in self-defense is only occasional and isolated, and is to be conducted only in a crisis situation. Only a legitimate head of state has the authority to declare war. Any preacher or so-called self-made leader, or scholar has no right to pronounce an armed struggle against an aggressor. Moreover, the strict rules governing the conduct of warfare are to be obeyed; for example, non-combatants cannot be killed. Women, children, elderly and the clergy or monks cannot be targeted. Property cannot be destroyed. Disfiguring of dead bodies is prohibited. Prisoners of war are to be treated humanely.

The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community believes that the doctrine of Jihad has been entirely perverted by the so-called “fundamentalists” and it needs to be rescued, and the offenders stopped by all possible means.

What is ahead of us?

Now the question arises, What can we do together—Muslims and Christians living in the United States of America? I think it is imperative that we should review our Government’s foreign policy with an honest self-criticism, and ask our elected law-makers and the Administra-

tion to avoid all such actions which are counterproductive, and instead of reducing terrorism are actually helping more terrorist groups to emerge among the radical Muslims.

Americans should be made aware of the miserable condition of Palestinian Christian and Muslim refugees. We need to be more sympathetic to their plight and right to return to their homeland to live a decent life. Moreover, human rights of religious minorities need to be protected. American public in general and the faith-based communities in particular have to become more vocal and more effective in safeguarding human rights of the suffering—be they Muslims or Christians or any other faith community. Similarly, humanitarian help needs to be provided to the victims of war in Afghanistan, Iraq and the Muslim and Christian civilians in Palestine.

Churches in America need to work closely with moderate Muslims. We must try to guard against judging Islam by double standards. We interpret differently the violent texts in the Bible in their historical contexts, but we pick up verses from the Qur’an to prove as if Islam teaches perpetual violence. Christian faith leadership, whether Catholic or Protestant, instead of demeaning Islam and the Prophet of Islam, should condemn attacks on Islam that are done regularly through the media, and by some Christian leaders. Christian attacks on Islam or the The Holy Prophet (peace be upon him) do not help solve the problem. They actually aggravate the present tense situation. No Muslim ever, even the most hateful and radical ones, shall insult Jesus or Moses. They express their full reverence for them as the prophets and chosen ones of God.

We need to wage an information war against the hate-preaching Mullahs and against their perverted ideology of Jihad. The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community has taken the lead to rebut modern day radical scholars such as Maulana Maududi, Hasan Al-Banna, Sayyid Qutb and ‘Abd al-Salam Faraj. All are invited to read *Murder in the Name of Allah* (1953) by Hadhrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad – the Fourth Spiritual Head of the International Ahmadiyya Muslim Community.

The Muslims living in the West need your support to educate Church members by circulating anti-radical literature

produced by moderate and peace-loving Muslims, especially by the Ahmadiyya leadership. To counter the radical propaganda such as “Islam is under attack by the West,” “Islam is in danger;” or “America is leading the West to conquer Muslim lands to destroy Islam,” I suggest that we, the Muslims living in the West, have to show that Islam is not in danger in the West; we are free to practice and promote our faith in America; many mosques are coming up, and the number of Muslims is rapidly growing.

There is a need of an ongoing inter-faith dialogue, and the commonalities between Islam and Christianity need to be elaborated. The Qur’an stresses that the People of the Book—the Muslims, Jews and Christians, should work together on the commonly held values. We must promote our shared values of love, mutual respect, tolerance and freedom of worship. We have to improve our understanding of our neighbors’ faith. For Christians, it will be helpful to remove existing misunderstandings about Islam, which is the second largest religion in the world after Christianity, and is the fastest growing religion, not only out there somewhere, but also in Europe and in our own country America.

In the past, the Jews, the Christians and the Muslims have worked together in advancement of sciences, medicine, philosophy and many other fields. It is time to create a new culture of co-existence and cooperation. Instead of thinking of clash of civilizations, let’s think together to create a new Judeo-Christian Islamic civilization based on mutual respect, love, peace and justice!

The task ahead is not easy, but we have hope for the future. We have the will to work hard, with patience and steadfastness. Please allow me to conclude my remarks by reading out a small poem by entitled “Love Can Wait” written by Lon Woodrum, a writer, teacher and Christian minister:

Love Can Wait. Hate moves With swift impatience, Bent to know the fall of pity, And the end of faith, Feverish to see Its banners blow, In darkness over fields of death.

But love is patient Till all time is passed; Love waits on God, Sure in its stand No matter what the years May bring, at last All ages gather To His command.

Hail to the chief...

The elephant and the donkey have started to look alike.

I'm not referring to the anatomy of the gentle creatures.

I am actually talking about the Republicans and the Democrats. In the last 30 to 40 years, they have continually shifted their positions to the point there isn't much difference between them anymore.

The election results of the past few years support my observation. The votes had been split just about in the middle. This means voters perceived one candidate to be as good as the other one. On the flip side, it could also mean they figured one was as bad as the other. I guess it depends on how the pollsters asked the question.

The two party system is a subsection of the system of government. In order to discuss anything about the party system, I must talk about the concept of having the best kind of government.

In general, the Holy Qur'an does not condemn any form of government. There have been emperors and kings in history and the Holy Qur'an confirms some of them as prophets of God. Kings David, Solomon, Talut and many others are examples of monarchs who were messengers of God. God has praised their exercise of justice. So monarchy, in and of itself, is not evil. However, the Holy Qur'an has given preference to a democratic ideology and system as the best form of government.

We are told in *Sura Shura* that the authority must engage in mutual consultations be-

to be the right of a citizen. It calls it a trust and as such, it is an obligation not just a right. It is a trust given to a person by God and the individual must discharge it with integrity. By voting for a person, one is not doing the candidate any favor. The candidate receiving the vote does not owe anything in return. The voter discharges his trust by voting for the best person in his assessment and fulfills his responsibility. If he votes for any other reason then he is answerable to God. It is God's commandment that he should discharge his trust in the best manner according to *Surah*

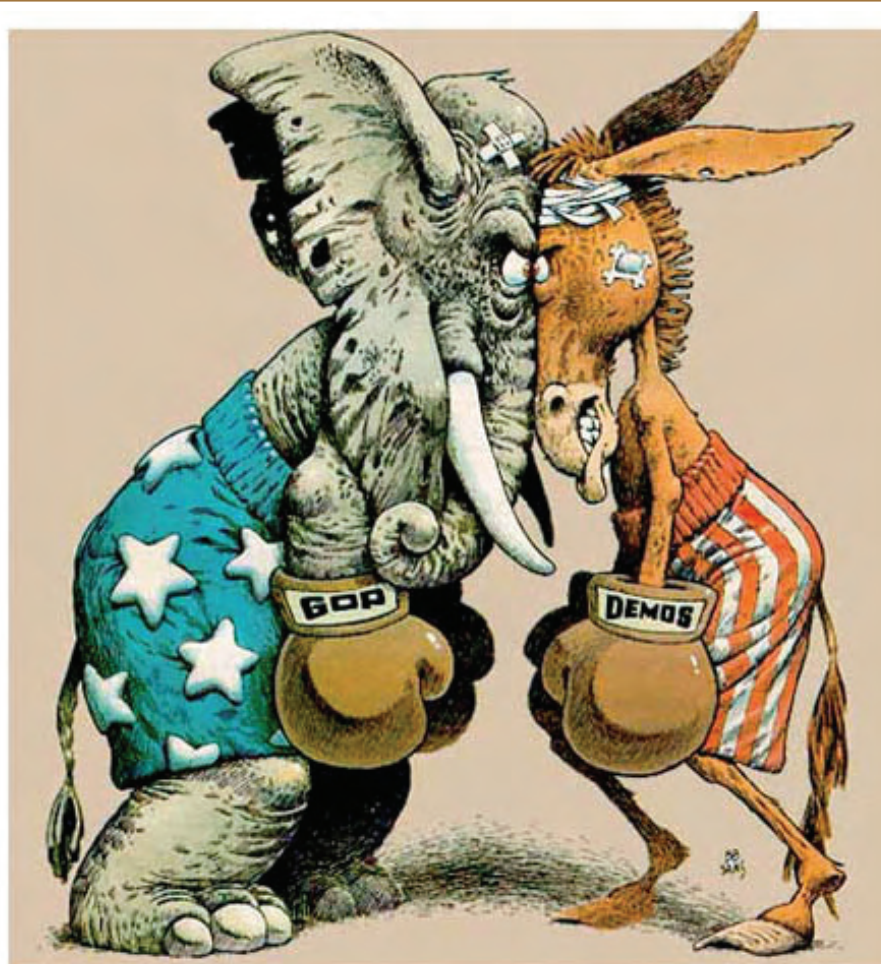
Al-Nisa.

Just imagine an election like that. The politicians don't owe anything to the people who voted for them. The voters have no demands from the people whom they voted for. The politicians decide things on the merits of issues, instead of special interest considerations. Lobbyists lose their jobs.

Islam also establishes the rule that no one should be given a public office if he desires it. Islam discourages the slightest selfish interests which may tempt authority against the interests of the masses. There goes the option of voting for yourself. Even running for an office goes against this principle. The whole process of candidates making promises disappears. People pro-

pose the names of suitable people and endorse them to be elected. No filthy campaigns can take place. The only principle behind negative campaigning is that you claim you are better than the other person. We can call it what we may, but that's good ol' fashioned arrogance. This also indicates that the candidate truly covets the position of authority, so they'd be disqualified anyway. It is truly a simple and clean system.

By now you should be able to see how the idea of political parties becomes useless. A person would vote for someone not because



fore reaching decisions. The consultation system is the democracy it suggests to establish. The system can be in any form. Depending on the social, economic and educational structure of the society, a suitable system can be established. It can be the Parliament, Congress, Senate, General Assembly or *Shura*. Any form would work as long as it represents the people and is established to deliberate public issues.

This brings me to the system of voting to elect the authority and/or the consulting body.

The Holy Qur'an does not consider a vote

The other principle that God has established for the government is that it must act with absolute justice. The Holy Qur'an even says: "Let not a people's enmity incite you to act otherwise than with justice." So even if we have political parties, the rule of justice must not be ignored.

he is Republican or Democrat but because he or she is the most suitable for the position. If a Republican knows that the Democrat is best for the job, he must vote for him. Otherwise he is answerable to God for not discharging his trust properly.

Once the government is established, the Holy Qur'an requires two things from it.

It must take care for the four basic needs of the public. *Sura Taha* describes: "It is provided for thee that thou wilt not hunger therein, nor wilt thou be naked. And thou wilt not thirst therein, nor will thou be exposed to the sun."

This basically covers the four necessities of every citizen: food, clothing, water and shelter. We need the example of Hadhrat Umar (2nd Caliph of Islam) in history in relation to this responsibility. He would go around the outskirts of the city to find if there was anyone who was going hungry. He even would haul the food bags on his back to deliver them to the needy. Hail to

the chief who is the servant of the people.

Being the monarch, he felt his responsibility to his citizens under the above commandment of God. The third world countries have the worst record in this regard. However, the advanced countries, like the USA, have not taken care of the homeless and hungry either. The focus needs to be changed to fulfill the commandment of God.

The other principle that God has established for the government is that it must act with absolute justice. The Holy Qur'an even says: "Let not a people's enmity incite you to act otherwise than with justice." So even if we have political parties, the rule of justice must not be ignored.

This answers the question of how to handle minorities in one's country. Whether it is a religious or political minority, it must be dealt with absolute justice. The ruling authority must not impose their faith or views on others just because they are smaller in number or strength. This concept

is intimately connected with freedom of religion and speech.

Until we get to the point where principles rooted in virtue would be established, we must deal with the system we live in. We must pick the elephant or the donkey. We must discharge our responsibility of voting and pray.

Pray that the person we have elected does not waste his energy in an endeavor to get re-elected for the next term. Pray that he would work for the common folk. They merely want to raise their families with dignity, love and respect their friends and relatives, and enjoy a peaceful society. We don't need any polls or experts to figure out this definition of pursuit of happiness. Pray that the newly elected would make decisions rooted in virtuous principles so the people would truly, from the bottom of their hearts, cry out ***Hail to the Chief!***

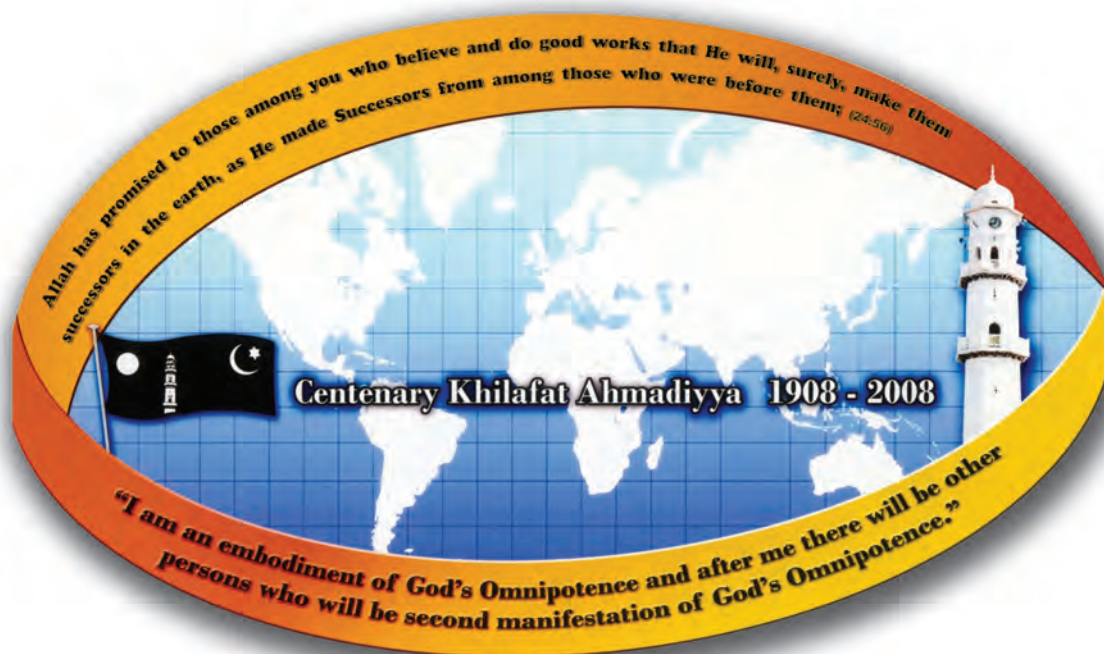
Falahud Din Shams

The Muslim Sunrise Board and Staff wishes to congratulate President-Elect Barack Hussein Obama. We pray for our country -- One nation, under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.



Season's Greetings & Eid Mubarak

"Allah is the Light of the Heavens and the Earth..." We praise and give thanks to Him for what He provides to our families and friends.



Ahmadiyya Muslim Community **KHILAFAT 1908 - 2008**

The word Khilafat means succession, and the Khalifa is a successor to a Prophet of Allah whose goal is to carry to completion the tasks of reformation and moral training that were seeded by the Prophet. The community of followers of a Prophet of Allah continues to nurture its faith and practices under the blessing of the institution of Khilafat for as long as Allah wishes.



Love For All. Hatred For None.

Four quarterly issues of the Muslim Sunrise for just \$15

subscribe now
muslimsunrise.com

For information on Islam: www.alislam.org



The Muslim Sunrise is published by the
Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, USA
2S 510 Rte. 53 Glen Ellyn, IL 60137

NON PROFIT ORG
U. S. POSTAGE
PAID
CHAUNCEY, OH
PERMIT NO. 1